

SUGGESTIONS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

RELATIVE TO

HUMAN PERFECTION AND HAPPINESS.

DIDACTIC LECTURES.

V O L. IV.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR MESSRS. WHITE AND SON,
AT HORACE'S HEAD, FLEET-STREET,
MDCCXC.

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C O N T E N T S

OF THE

FOURTH VOLUME.

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A R G U M E N T S

AGAINST

V A N I T Y.

Let nothing be done through—vain-glory.

PHILIPP. ii. 3.

VOL. IV.

B

STATEMENTS

IN

WITNESS

Let nothing be done through envy or rivalry.

B

Vol. IV.

A R G U M E N T S

A G A I N S T

V A N I T Y.

THERE are faults and vices, which so manifestly appear to be what they really are, and the shameful nature and hurtful effects whereof present themselves so clearly to the eyes of every person not totally destitute of thought, that none will venture a word in their behalf; which all men, every where, wherever they are found, and under whatever form they assume, immediately pronounce to be faults and vices, and abhor them as such, or at least account them worthy of detestation and abhorrence. This is the case, for

B 2 example,

example, with robbery, murder, perjury, avarice, lying, open vengeance, the grosser and more depraved kinds of gluttony and voluptuousness. Their very name is disgrace; the bare suspicion of them pollutes; and their baleful influence on the welfare of the whole community is so undeniable and apparent, that they are ever opposed by the majority, and therefore can never become universally prevalent, nor dare to hold up their heads in public without exciting horror.

But there are also other faults and vices, that are so seldom entirely taken for what they are; that are cunning enough to lurk under so many different harmless, or agreeable, and seducing forms; and whose hurtful consequences are so little striking, and so little affect the generality of mankind; that we see them spring up, extend, multiply, and by little and little become more prevalent and universal, without exhibiting the

the smallest concern about the matter, whether the society in general, or individuals in particular, are likely to be injured by it. To this class, for instance, belong levity, a propensity to a life of dissipation, an extravagant fondness for social pleasures and pastimes, pomp, luxury, pride, vanity; all of them faults and vices which the more easily strike root, and may the more surely become predominant, as their exterior is so very deceitful; as the ideas we are apt to form of them are so vague and fluctuating; as they excite so little dread and detestation, and consequently meet with so little resistance. But do they therefore cease to be what they are? Do they therefore effect less mischief, because they do not occasion it directly, not immediately, not in so alarming and hostile a way, but more silently, more slowly, and more unobservedly? Are not their attacks on our welfare but so much the more dangerous, as they do

not openly lay siege to it, but undermine it by stealth? And now, if, notwithstanding all our security and indifference, there be still real danger, nearer or remoter danger, ought not, at least, the public teachers of Wisdom and Religion to advertise us of it? Nay, they should not only watch with us, but even for us; and watch even then when the generality abandon themselves to an improvident and heedless slumber!

Well then, allow me to do my duty this day in regard to one of the fore-mentioned faults; and this fault is Vanity. To me it appears more dangerous than perhaps it may seem to you. Probably I may have reflected more upon it, and more impartially than many of you. At least, it is my duty to tell you what bad and mischievous effects I fear it may occasion; and it is your parts to see, that they be prevented or removed.—It is not petulance, but love, that may you firmly believe, sincere

cere and real love for you, an earnest desire of promoting intrinsic perfection, which has suggested to me all I have to say on the subject; and in the same dispositions I hope you will hear and employ it. I shall by all means avoid applications. They shall be entirely left to your own judgment. The faults of which the Apostle Paul warns Christians in our text, are the faults whereof I intend to warn you. He says to them, "Let nothing be done through vain-glory, or from a vain propensity to please." For making the properest use of this admonition, I shall now do two things:

First, shew what vanity is, whereby it exhibits itself, and how it becomes criminal and vicious; and

Then lay before you its mischievous effects, and thus provide you with the necessary weapons for waging war against it.

Confound not vanity with allowable and generous emulation. This impels us along the way of wisdom, of virtue, of a beneficent and generally useful life, with a noble ardour for obtaining the esteem of our fellow-citizens and of mankind, or rather to make ourselves worthy of it, whether we succeed or not : the other, vanity, inclines us to seek pre-eminence in all things, and particularly in trifling, little-estimable, or quite insignificant matters ; to be ever hankering after approbation and praise ; and accordingly to place every thing that has any value only in regard to us, and only in any way belongs to us, or stands in connexion with us, in the most favourable point of view, and by all manner of means to give it consequence.

Confound not likewise vanity with pride or haughtiness. They are both faults, but faults not entirely alike ; and do not always go together. Each may subsist of
itself

itself alone. If pride be not unfrequently connected with vanity, yet does it as often, probably still oftener, exclude it; as vanity, in return, is very frequently, nay, generally, without pride. Many are too proud to be vain: many, very many, are only therefore vain, because they are not proud enough, or have not materials enough for pride. Pride founds itself more on the sentiment of inward power, and is the excessive dignification and evaluation of it: Vanity has more to do with outward things, which do not belong to ourselves, and possess no intrinsic value. It is on this account a still meaner fault, a still more ignoble quality than pride, and, on the whole, occasions much more harm. However, the boundaries of these two faults are not always stated with due precision; they frequently intrude on one another; are often confounded together in common conversation; and, if in combating them we should likewise confound them, we shall always
be

be only taking one foe to our welfare for another, but never exchange a foe for a friend. Therefore, to the point !

What is Vanity? and how does it appear? Vanity has a very ample range; it shews itself in very various ways. It in general consists in the avidity and the endeavour to attract regard, to be distinguished from others, to set its advantages in the fullest light, and to give them an air of importance. As various as these advantages are, so various are the kinds and exhibitions of Vanity. Thus the witty let their wit, the rich their riches, the great their grandeur, shine before men. Thus will Beauty shew its sway, Accomplishments their charms, Talents their claims on admiration, Science its influence upon the human mind, and, at times, even Virtue her inherent authority over the human heart. They will make others feel them, and by the display and use of their privileges acquire esteem, approbation,

probation, praise, submission, and reverence; and if, from such reasons, and in such views, they speak, keep silence, act, and shew themselves, then Vanity mixes with the behaviour of the virtuous, the learned, the skilful, the accomplished, or the fair: and, if these reasons, these views determine frequently, if they habitually influence their discourses and actions, if they have greater weight with them, and act more forcibly upon them, than love towards what is good and real, more than the desire to please God, and to be useful to their fellow-beings; then does this vanity with them become a vice, and deprives their advantages of the greatest part of their value.

We must closely attend to this distinction. The desire of pleasing is very natural to us all; it induces us all to shew ourselves to others on the bettermost side; and to it we are undoubtedly indebted for many gratifications

fications and advantages, more especially in regard to social intercourse. It prevents many fallies of base and hurtful passions; spares us the disgusting sight of many indecent and vulgar scenes; lessens the number of scandals and offences in the world; frequently gives rise to good actions; may even, by imperceptible degrees, have a salutary influence on the dispositions of men; and is always a homage we pay to Virtue and to the dignity of our nature. So long as this propensity is not the principal, not the predominant propensity, in our soul; so long as it is kept in due subordination to what we owe to God and to Religion, to Truth and to Duty; so long as it employs no unlawful means of gratification, none that disunite and offend mankind: so long may we account it a good principle of action, and need not pronounce it criminal Vanity.

But has this lust of pleasing got so far the command over us, that we no longer
alk,

ask, what is true, what is right, what is agreeable to the will of God and to my duty; but only, what will please; what will procure me approbation and praise; what will set my advantages in the most favourable light; does it govern us so, that we strive to please every man, the fool as well as the wise, the vicious no less than the virtuous, such as are children in understanding, as well as those that think like men; does it govern us so that we endeavour not only to display our advantages, but at the same time to obscure and diminish the advantages of others, and to bring them into suspicion; does it govern us so as to make us lay great stress on all that relates to outward figure, ornament, presentation, and address, or the like, to convert them into a serious and important business, and to bestow much time and care on such generally insignificant things; does it, in fine, so govern us, that, for the sake of pleasing others, we allow ourselves to

be persuaded to do even something bad, at least something ambiguous, or not dare to say and to do the good that probably is not quite current, and adapted to the taste of the multitude, and to perform the duty, and adequately to perform it, the neglect and omission whereof is probably thought an honour: then, indeed, is our desire of pleasing, and of displaying our advantages highly criminal; then is it base and mean vanity; vanity that is totally unworthy of the man and the Christian!

And now how much do I wish to convince you of this! What a multitude of corrupt and baleful consequences are produced by Vanity in general, and in particular the propensity to please by outward things! Accompany me in these considerations with silent attention, and lay up materials for farther reflexion.

Vanity commonly deprives a man of
what

what he inherently possesses, of the originality he has, and which makes him to be personally that and no other individual; the temper of mind which causes him to view and to judge, and to treat the things that are without and around him on this and not on another side, and whereby he accordingly gives occasion to others to consider hundreds of things on a new and unobserved side, or in new and unusual connexions, and by that means to enlarge their horizon, to correct their judgment and their taste, and the like; all this is generally impracticable among men that are tyrannised over by Vanity. No one will venture to be, and to appear, that which he actually is; so to see, to judge, to treat other men or things as they all actually appear to him; so to walk and to behave, as prompted by his sagacity, his dispositions, his taste, and his wants. Each will direct himself by the prevailing fashion; each will be, or appear to be, what others
are,

are, or seem to be. Accordingly, one will judge as the other judges; and all of them so, as some few men do, whose hap it is to prescribe the *ton*. Accordingly, one will behave himself like the other, comport himself like the other, dress himself like the other; and all so as chance, or the humour of some unknown person, or the folly and levity of a stranger, has thought fit to determine that men shall behave, and demean, and dress themselves. Accordingly each man a hundred and a hundred times belyes his taste, his understanding, his feelings, for the sake of doing what others do; is thoroughly sensible of the burden that oppresses him; sighs under it in secret; knows not properly who it was that laid it upon him; and yet does not dare to cast it from him. Accordingly, he always frames and models himself by others; is continually circumscribing himself on all sides more and more; allows himself continually to be bound with more bands;

bands; is continually becoming more and more unlike to himself; and shews himself a hundred times in his borrowed mask, for once that he appears in his natural mien. And hence necessarily arises a tiresome, disgusting uniformity in discourses, conversations, judgments, manners, and usages; a pernicious stop, or a very slow progress, in the development of human capacities and powers; nature is stifled by art, and the man is lost under the multitude of husks and coverings in which he is involved and disguised.

Vanity, particularly in regard to outward and borrowed things, usually implies weakness, want of real merit, a deficiency in really respectable qualities; it is almost always the fault of empty heads, and little souls. Whoever feels their own worth, as a man, as a citizen, as a Christian, as an upright father of a family, as a worthy mistress of a house, persons that know and

feel that they fill their station, do honour to their office, conscientiously discharge their duty, perform useful service to society : they likewise know and feel, that they merit approbation, esteem, and honour ; they therefore do not see it with anxiety, make no parade of outward, little, insignificant advantages, which, when brought into competition with the former, are nothing, and which they themselves cannot regard as meritorious. But whoever is destitute of such real advantages, feels no inward vigour and force in himself ; distinguishes himself from others, neither by wisdom, nor virtue, nor a generally useful life ; possesses no actual merit ; and finds himself neither fitted nor inclined to acquire them, and yet would make some figure in human society, play a certain part, and force himself into attention and regard : he must indeed have recourse to such little artifices, and endeavour, by his pomp, his garb, his decorations, his
6 figure,

figure, his outward carriage, to conceal, or in some measure to compensate, the want of real advantages and intrinsic desert. A consideration that ought to terrify every soul, in which one glimmering spark of generous fire is left, any sentiment of native dignity and power, from all vanity, and cover them with shame as often as they are tempted to seek their worth, or their glory, in outward contingent things, that form no part of themselves.

Vanity is, thirdly, the parent of innumerable errors; it hinders a man from rightly perceiving and appreciating the value of things, and from honouring himself and other men according to the proper scale, and from judging of every matter by what it really is. Vanity is the sworn enemy of truth, and the manly intellect. Where that prevails, there will all deceive, and all be deceived; there semblance will rarely be distinguished from

reality; every one is dazzled by show, takes art for nature, grimace for sincerity, lives more in an imaginary than in an actual world. What does not glitter is despised, rejected, though it were even the most precious of jewels! That alone which strikes the eye, which sparkles, is esteemed and prized, though it were even the flimsiest tinsel! Where Vanity prevails, there will Wisdom, in her simple attire, there will Virtue in her native beauty, pass unnoticed and unknown; and if they venture to step forth into observation, they run the hazard of being hooted and derided. But Folly, in her party-coloured, tawdry dress, and Vice in her pomp, and with her gorgeous train, will command attention, approbation, esteem, encomiums, and reverence, from all ranks and conditions of the vain unthinking crowd. I will speak more plainly. Where Vanity prevails, and gives the *ton*, there will a man not be esteemed as a man; there will the rich be
respected

respected because he is rich, and the poor be slighted because he is poor; there no inquiries will be made about wisdom, none about virtue, but about appearance, incomes, and refined, engaging manners; there it is a matter of no concern, who is the humanest man, the usefulest citizen, the best Christian, but who is the most agreeable companion, the person of the finest taste, the most perfect echo of the prevailing fashion; there no one entertains a thought about merit, but about the semblance of merits; there the cloaths determine the worth of the man; there are amiable vices, and detestable virtues; there will ten moral faults, ten really bad actions, be more readily over-looked, than one sin against the rules of good-breeding and fashionable deportment.

Vanity is, fourthly, a manifest and continued affront to the whole society. The vain man is seeking for ever to blind us,

to impose upon us, and to lead us into errors ; to put every object out of its place, and to shew it us in a false point of view. We are to take him for more than he is worth ; to attribute to him more than he has ; to trust him beyond his means ; to have a better opinion of him than he deserves. He is ever busied in extorting from us the esteem and reverence that is only due to merit ; ever striving to appropriate the deference and respect, which of right belong only to Wisdom and Virtue, to himself and his cloaths, and his equipage, and his borrowed outward splendor ; or to steal away himself and his person from our merited contempt, amidst the bustle and glare that surrounds him ; certainly an affront that should induce every wise and good man to be so much the more on his guard not to suffer himself to be cheated, and not to bow the knee before the idols of Vanity.

This

This is not all : Vanity enervates a man ; renders him delicate and soft ; deprives him of all taste for what is really great, what in itself, and at all times, is beautiful and respectable, the taste for a noble and exalted simplicity ; it unfits him for all difficult, toilsome, magnanimous deeds, from which no praise and no renown is to be expected, all the domestic tranquil virtues, all generally useful activity in concealment ; supports and feeds him with impertinences and trifles ; teaches him to play with words and sentiments that have no concomitant thoughts and feelings ; cheats him with lying flatteries ; conceals from him the defects and wants of his intellect ; and robs him at length of all sentiment of intrinsic dignity, and a superior vocation. It keeps him constantly amused with airy bubbles ; ever artfully renders them of greater importance, and by that very means makes what is really important ever more indifferent, or ever more difficult to him. It

gives every thing of nought, every fleeting gleam, every tranſient charm, ſo much value in his eyes, that he has neither time nor powers left for troubling himſelf about that which is ſomething, that which is laſting, that which is valuable.

Hence it follows, ſixthy, that Vanity, and in particular that which regards externals, debaſes man, and is in oppoſition to his dignity. And, in fact, when I repreſent to myſelf a creature ſuch as man, a creature that is formed after the image of God, that is ſo capable of greater things, that is immortal, that is ordained to ſtrive after ever-improving perfection; a creature that is able to proceed ſo far in knowledge and in virtue, and may make ſuch various, noble, and in their conſequences unceaſingly profitable uſes of his time and his powers: when I repreſent to myſelf man, as he actually is, and then call to mind, how a man employs a great part of the day, and conſequently
a great,

a great, and that the best part of his life, in caring for his perishable body, to give his figure some new charm, in properly adjusting himself in regard to his appearance, his adorning, his whole exterior, exactly according to the newest predominant taste and fashion; how he stands reflecting so strenuously upon it, so attentively considers it, advises with himself, chooses, rejects, and chooses again: when I behold the man in this light, then—I must avow it—then I am tempted to be ashamed of this man, of my brother; I pity him, that he is so deeply fallen from his dignity; is so widely distant from his vocation, so very forgetful of his high descent, of his affinity with superior beings, and with God himself, and that he is so little that which he might and ought to be!

Yet more. Vanity, particularly in regard to outward things, is the strongest nourishment to levity. He who has been
so

so long, so earnestly, occupied in trifles, who ascribes them so much value, is ever living and moving in trifles, and among trifles, constantly makes them the subject of his conceits and fancies, takes a zealous part in all the revolutions they undergo, as well as in all kinds of sensual amusements, and frequently makes them his main concern, how can he find a taste for serious, really great and elevated matters? how perceive their worth? how feel their importance? how ever become a man, and learn to think in a manly way? Is not his life, how far soever he may have past the years of youth, a progressive, an ever-renewed childhood? How can the thoughts of God, of Religion, of a future and better life, find access to him, acquire his whole attention, give employment to his whole intellect, and present itself to his mind in its copious light? How can these reflexions connect themselves with all his affairs and concernments, with all he thinks and does
in

in ordinary life, at home and abroad, and thereby render effective his improvement and happiness?—How oft, on the contrary, will his vanity call him off from the practice of domestic devotion! how often prevent him from participating in the public worship of God! how often distract him when there, and direct his attention to quite different matters from those on which it ought to be turned! How quickly will the sight of some object of vanity efface the good impressions he has there received! How insipid will every thing become to him by degrees, that does not relate to splendour, glare, gentility, elegance, sport, and amusement! And where levity prevails, how can the man become wise and virtuous? how a Christian? how can he labour with intense application at his improvement? how reach the ends of his being? how qualify and prepare himself for that superior life, which most assuredly does not consist in fopperies?

Where

Where vanity prevails, and this too is a highly corrupt effect of it; where vanity prevails, there also prevails envy, jealousy, harsh judgment, and slander. The man will not only shine, but he will shine more than others, he will shine alone: he will have the handsomest figure, the most agreeable manners, the genteelest carriage, the finest taste, the best condition of life, the newest mode; is determined to out-do, but not to be out-done. With what acute and piercing eyes does he therefore contemplate them who have equal pretensions! How curiously does he spy out their failings! how eagerly swell them! how willingly does he hearken to the ill that is said of them! how artfully does he diminish or disguise what is good or beautiful, or eminent in them! And when he is not able to do this, when he is forced to do them justice, whether he will or no; does he see them with the same hearty, brotherly benevolence with which the wise man and the Christian

Christian beholds all that is beautiful and good? Does he feel no mortifications of self-conceit? Is he not thus frequently robbed of all social pleasure? And may then no emotions of hatred and animosity arise in his heart? no secret grudge have birth? May not the affection we owe to each other, as men and as Christians, be weakened? Are not, however, all these low, disgraceful passions; and must not vanity, which engenders and feeds them all, be low and disgraceful too?

In fine, vanity is completely at variance with the spirit of Christianity; Christianity, which every where preaches to us modesty and meekness; which requires us to be virtuous in silence, and to endeavour more at pleasing God than man, to look more at invisible than visible things. What admirable precepts on this head do the Apostles of our Lord particularly address to the professors of the Christian doctrine
that

that are of the softer sex! They are to distinguish themselves from others, not by the putting on of costly apparel, but by good and noble actions. And whoever does so, whoever takes up this distinction, needs none of the arts of Vanity for procuring esteem and honour. They are to adorn the hidden person of the heart, that which is not corruptible, to adorn their minds with knowledge, with wisdom, with virtue, and to excell others in the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. This, says the Apostle, is in the sight of God of great price; this is, even in his eyes, of great value; this pleases him, on whose judgment and complacency all depends.

And what an example on this article has JESUS also left us! Not only of no foreign, borrowed, exterior privilege did he boast; no, he boasted not of even real, intrinsic, actually great prerogatives: he rather concealed them; used them not in empty
views;

views ; did nothing for the sake of being admired ; displayed his wisdom and his superior discernments, not for astonishing, but for awakening his hearers.—Were it possible, that a vain man should possess but even a small portion of the power and advantages of JESUS, what regard, what noise, would he excite with it ! How much would he obscure, confound, and lay prostrate all about him !—How far was our Lord from all faults and weaknesses of this kind ! How justly did he judge of the value of men and things ! No semblance could deceive him ; no praise or applause could dazzle his eyes ; truth, intrinsic goodness, sincerity, and uprightness, were all that was current with him. And how little did he seek his own ! how much he forgot himself in his zeal for the salvation of his brethren !—And we, we shall be Christians, shall be scholars, followers, friends of this JESUS, shall proportionably fill his place
among

among mankind; and all the while allow ourselves to be governed by Vanity; all the while be anxiously protruding and displaying, by all possible means, every true and false, personal and borrowed advantage, and more particularly outward and most insignificant things, and thereby lose time, and ability, and inclination for better and more noble concerns, for truly Christian exercises and deeds! No, no; Vanity is manifestly in opposition to Christianity, as well as to Reason; is in opposition to the the dignity of human nature, to our inward perfection, to the good of the whole community.

And now, let every man judge, whether it be so slight a fault as men for the most part imagine; whether it is not attended with the most corrupt and pernicious effects; whether we have not the weightiest reasons for cautioning such as we
love

love from this terrible source of folly and evil.—I know very well that vanity does not yet prevail among us to such a degree as it may elsewhere in larger societies, and that therefore all its bad consequences are not yet so conspicuous among us as they may be elsewhere, and as I have represented as its natural effects. But, what it is not, and does not yet, that may and will it, sooner or later, become and do, if it meet with no restraint.—I likewise very well know, that the generality of outward things, that, in particular, whatever relates to dressing and decorating the body, in and of themselves are quite indifferent; but in their principles, in the manner of regarding and treating them, and in the influence they may and actually have upon our frame of thinking, they certainly cease to be indifferent.—I, lastly, very well know, that the single expression, “one must not distinguish oneself, one ought not to

be particular," is sufficient of itself, with the generality, to defeat at once all that the teacher of Wisdom and Religion can say on this subject. But how pointless soon would all these terrible weapons of vanity be, if only a few, truly wise, good, and respectable persons would unite together to oppose the torrent, and content themselves with the sentiment of their own intrinsic worth, and the approbation of a small number of eminently intelligent and virtuous men! What a mortal blow would thus be given to vanity! And may not this, soon or late, be expected, may it not be hoped for among Christians? — In the mean time, however, will I, as I said at the beginning, make no application, censure none, prescribe no laws to any, not peremptorily condemn or blame what, abstractedly considered, is totally indifferent. My design has been only to furnish matter for reflection to
such

such as are able and willing to think, and to strew seed, that probably here and there may fall into some generous hearts, there strike root, spring up in concealment, and in time bear fruit, "He therefore that hath ears to hear, let him hear!"

WORLDLY PRUDENCE,

A

REPROACH

TO

CHRISTIAN WISDOM.

The Children of this World are in their generation wiser than the Children of Light.

LUKE, xvi. 8.

WORLDLY PRUDENCE

REPROACH

CHRISTIAN WISDOM

The Children of this World are in their generation wiser than the Children of Light.
Luke, xvi. 8.

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WORLDLY PRUDENCE,

REPROACH

CHRISTIAN WISDOM.

IT has frequently been made a reproach to mankind, that they hold a conduct inconsistent with their own maxims; and daily experience teaches us, that this reproach is by no means without foundation. Compare but the way in which they pursue their earthly affairs and concerns, and provide for their outward welfare, with the way in which they fulfill the duties of Christianity, and labour at their spiritual and everlasting felicity; how often shall we see them do and allow, in this respect,

the direct reverse of what they do and allow in the former! Are they, on one hand, attentive and diligent in studying the businesses, the customs, the pleasures, the advantages of this world, the way to riches, to honours, and to power; yet, on the other, in regard to most of the things which relate to the perfection and the peace of their souls, they remain in ignorance, or content themselves with a very superficial knowledge. Nothing escapes their attention, on one side, that can but any way promote or contribute to fix their temporal prosperity; they are most sensibly vexed, whenever it is weakened or shaken; and yet, on the other side, are quite cold and indifferent in regard to all that concerns their everlasting salvation and the bliss of heaven, and suffer, without pain or uneasiness, the greatest calamities of soul. If, on one hand, they are vigilant, busy, laborious, unwearied, bold, and resolute, when their terrestrial goods and
affairs

affairs are in question ; yet are they, on the other hand, drowzy, sluggish, and timid ; they are all imbecillity and irresolution, when they are required to quit their bad habits, to strive against their failings, to conquer their passions, to fulfill the duties of a real Christian, and thus to render themselves capable and worthy of a blessed immortality. They are generally well enough informed, that, if they would attain to certain ends, they must use the proper means thereto ; that they must be intelligent, circumspect, and diligent in the application of them ; that they must not allow themselves to be intimidated and driven from their purpose by every impediment and difficulty that stands in their way ; that they must frequently relinquish a smaller advantage for the sake of a greater, and sacrifice a present transient satisfaction to a future and durable pleasure ; and they follow these dictates of prudence in their earthly affairs.

But

But as soon as these rules are to be applied to their spiritual and eternal concerns, they behave exactly as if they absolutely knew nothing of them, or as if they thought them inapplicable and false. Thus do the generality of men contradict themselves, and daily act diametrically opposite to their own principles and rules of conduct, their own discernments and feelings; a melancholy and mournful truth! how humiliating, how disgraceful to mankind! but how much adapted likewise to abate their pride, lead them to self-acquaintance, and to fill them with a salutary alarm at the dangerous state of their moral condition! Nothing can be more desirable to me than to contribute to impress this truth upon your hearts; by representing it in its full effulgence, to dissipate the errors that blind us in this regard, deter us from our foolish negligence in the weightiest of all concerns, awaken our slumbering conscience, and induce us to work out our salvation with

with fear and trembling. In furtherance of these designs, I shall, under the divine assistance and blessing, do two things. First, I shall briefly explain the words of our text; and then I shall endeavour to unfold the truth of them in a constant regard to our own behaviour.

The "children of this world," says our Saviour, "are wiser in their generation than the children of light." These words relate to the allegory of the Unjust Steward, and must be elucidated from it. The unfaithful steward is called upon to give an account of the administration of the goods committed to his charge, and knew beforehand that he could not stand out the inquiry, but that his office would be taken from him. He therefore thinks on means for securing himself against the want and misery that seemed to threaten him. He comes to the resolution of attaching his master's debtors to him by an apparently

generous remission of a considerable part of their debts, thereby to induce them afterwards to take him to them, and to let him share in the profits for which they had him to thank. Though this transaction was, in and of itself, extremely unjust, yet it evinced a capacity of succouring himself, and of finding an escape in such situations as would throw a thousand others into the perplexities of despair. It was the transaction of a man that never lost the use of his reason and reflexion at sight of the most imminent danger, and in the most distressing circumstances acted with all the prudence of a person whose mind and heart were in the utmost composure. The lord of this unjust steward would not refrain from applauding his procedure, in far as it was a demonstration of his prudence and quickness of parts, without, however, approving of the unlawful means he had employed for avoiding his utter ruin. Hereupon now our Saviour makes the remark we find in our text: "The
" children

“children of this world,” says he, “are
“in their generation wiser than the chil-
“dren of light.” Who are the children of
this world? Who are the children of
light? In what design does our Divine
Teacher compare them together? A few
short remarks will be sufficient for reply-
ing to these questions.

The children of this world are men who
highly prize, love, and seek, nothing but
riches, the honours, and the pleasures of
this earth; who make them their chief
concern; who hold the possession and en-
joyment of these vain and transient things
for their sovereign good; and devote all
their capacities, all their time, all their
faculties, and frequently even the hope of
future happiness, to these pursuits. The
children of light, on the contrary, are
they, who, enlightened by a divine revela-
tion, understand their duties, and their voca-
tion; who are instructed in the will of God,
and in the means of rendering themselves
acceptable

acceptable to him; who are fully persuaded that their soul is immortal, and that, to this state of discipline and trial, a state of retribution will succeed; who firmly believe all these things, think often on them, and likewise take more or less pains to live conformably to their belief. These are the persons whom Christ contrasts together in our text.

“The children of this world,” says he, “are wiser in their generation,” or, in their way, namely, in their way of thinking and acting, “than the children of light;” that is, the former are more attentive, more prudent, more dextrous, in managing their concerns and affairs, than the latter: the former evince an understanding, a prudence, an industry, a harmony of design and conduct, a zeal and a resolution in the prosecution of their schemes, which cannot readily be discerned among the latter: the children of light frequently commit
such

such blunders, and are guilty of such negligences, as the children of this world never fall into. You would not easily imagine, that this proposition, though couched in the most general expressions, and applicable to all particular persons without distinction, who belong to these two classes, yet that many exceptions are made to the rule in regard to both. For as on one side there are worldly-minded men enough who are completely negligent as well towards their earthly and temporal, as their spiritual and eternal welfare, and by a senseless and foolish procedure at one and the same time are bringing destruction on their outward prosperity, their health, their life, and their soul; so, on the other, there certainly are pious men, who endeavour just as diligently, just as zealously and resolutely, to discharge their duties, to work out their salvation, to become ever wiser and holier, to augment the treasure of their good works, and to extend

extend the empire of Religion and Virtue in the world, as the worldly-minded man can do for prosecuting the plans his pride or his ingenuity has formed. The proposition then contained in our text must be understood of what most commonly and frequently happens among the bulk of mankind; and in this sense it is but too true, that "the children of this world are wiser in their way than the children of light." Of this, the following remarks will give us the most deplorable demonstration.

The children of this world, the worldly-wise, in the first place sedulously inform themselves of the things of this world, and of the way a man must take for attaining his views. They pass whole years in learning whatever can fit them for promoting their outward welfare, for successfully carrying on their trade and business, for obtaining and preserving certain
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posts and dignities. They neglect nothing which may facilitate their study of the true nature of these objects, and the relation in which they stand to their happiness. They eagerly avail themselves of all that may cast some light upon them; they call to their aid the ingenuity and experiences of others, who are older and wiser than they, and are ever labouring to improve and complete the knowledge they have already acquired. Do we act thus, we, who are the children of light, we, who are Christians? We are instructed, indeed, from our earliest infancy, in the doctrines and duties of Religion; we are taught to know the only true God, and JESUS CHRIST whom he has sent; we are publicly informed of his holy will; we are told of his greatness, and the wonders of his love; and we possess at home all the necessary helps for studying what will make us wise to salvation, by reading and reflexion. But how do we employ

these means of instruction, and what effects do they produce? Do we heartily apply ourselves to the study of Religion, and to meditation upon it? and do we strive constantly more and more to get juster and plainer ideas of its salutary doctrines? Do we know God, and the relation we stand in to him? Do we know what he has done for us, and what he requires of us, as the worldly man knows the world in which he lives, the connexions in which he stands towards other men and with the whole community, and the duties he is bound to by these connexions? Are we as well acquainted with the way that leads to virtue and to everlasting happiness, as the worldly-wise are with the means of arriving at the possession of the goods after which they strive? Do we inquire about the impediments and difficulties we may meet with on that way, and after the means of surmounting them, with as much concern as the children of this world inquire after what

what may be useful or injurious to them, what may advance or impede the execution of their plans? Are we as docile and grateful as they, when any one points out to us certain dangers to which we imprudently expose ourselves, and warns us of them; when he holds up to us what is faulty in our conduct, and shews us how much it is at variance with our duty, and with our present or future happiness; when we are admonished, intreated, conjured, to stop short in our dangerous career, and retreat from the verge of the precipice, to which our carelessness and folly has brought us? Oh, how much should the comparison humiliate and shame us! And yet what are all the speculations and knowledge that relate solely to the world and the present life! what are they when set against those which concern us as Christians that are called to immortality! How much more necessary and important are these than the former! How much wiser is a Paul, who

knows nothing, and will know nothing, save the doctrine of JESUS CHRIST, the crucified! How much wiser is he than the worldly-man, who is ignorant in respect to the doctrine of salvation, but is thoroughly versed in the businesses and affairs of this life! Certainly it surpasses imprudence, it is the greatest folly, to study with infinite pains what we can only make use of for a few days, and not to know that, or not to understand it thoroughly, which may make us for ever happy. Let us then take shame to ourselves, that the children of this world are, in this respect, wiser than the children of light.

This they are in the second place, since they have a steady regard to the end which they pursue, which they make their constant object and meditation, and never lose sight of it, let it be wealth, or power, or honours, or pleasure. The covetous man seeks nothing else than to enrich himself,
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to heap treasure on treasure ; and this is the sole concern that interests his heart, that is always uppermost, that constantly employs him. The ambitious thinks only how he may distinguish himself from the crowd, raise himself above others, and increase or confirm his power and consequence ; and all, that does not contribute to his elevation, he regards with complete indifference. The voluptuary follows after the pleasures alone to which he is addicted, and esteems neither wealth nor honours otherwise than as they may be subservient to the gratifying of his unbridled appetite. And this very uniformity of design, this predominant and ever-active propensity to certain things, this fixed resolution to possess them, is the cause why the children of this world labour with indefatigable ardour in the execution of their projects, boldly vanquish the obstacles in their way, and frequently succeed in the most arduous undertakings. Do we resemble them in

this respect too, we, who are the children of light? The will of God, and his gracious designs upon us, are not concealed from our view. We know our high vocation. We know that we are immortal, and that our spirit is capable of a continually increasing perfection, and of everlasting bliss. We know, that it is here we are to lay the foundation of our future perfection and happiness, and that we cannot do this, unless we secure the divine favour by faith and repentance, exercise ourselves in obedience to his commands, and frame our mind and life by his good pleasure. Is this now the ultimate aim, the steady purport, of all we think, and wish, and do? Have we chosen the good part, that shall never be taken from us? Do we seek first and chiefly the kingdom of God, and his righteousness? Do we prefer the favour of God, and the hope of eternal life? Do we prefer wisdom and virtue to all the goods and advantages
of

of the world? Can we honestly say, "I have sworn, and am stedfastly purposed to keep thy righteous judgments?" and, if this our mark is the grand concern of our life, do we keep it continually in view? do we frequently cast our eyes upon it? do we regulate all our actions by it? or, are we still in doubt and uncertainty in regard to the party we shall embrace, that of serving the Lord, or preferring the goods and advantages of the world to his service? Yes, this unhappy doubt, this destructive uncertainty it is, that exposes many of us to the hazard of losing their souls. We are ever standing, as it were, where two ways meet, the ways of good and evil, determining alternately, one while for this, and then for the other. We would wish to serve God, and likewise the world: we would hearken to the divine commands, and, at the same time, do all that our sensual desires suggest; we would frame ourselves on the model of virtue and piety

which JESUS has left us ; and without this imitation it is impossible for us to be real Christians : but we would likewise conform to the present world, and have not courage enough to distinguish ourselves from its children by a regular and upright conduct : we would indeed obtain the kingdom of Heaven, but not renounce, for its sake, the empty charms of sin. Thus are we ever halting between God and the world, between virtue and vice. Thus do we pass our whole life in forming plans which we never execute, in making resolves we never carry to effect. Thus are we ever striving in vain to unite the most opposite extremes, and to combine things together which are directly repugnant to each other. Need we then be surprised, if we are at all times exceedingly feeble and frail, continue always the slaves of sin, if we make no progress on the way of virtue and sanctification, if never get nearer the perfection to which we are called ? And can we for-
bear

bear likewise here to make the humiliating confession, "that the children of this world are wiser in their way than the children of light?"

This is not all: the children of this world are not satisfied with proposing to themselves some certain aim, and at times looking steadily at it. They truly take the way that leads thereto. They use all the means which may tend to procure them the riches, or honours, or pleasures, they seek. They examine the various means that offer with the closest attention. They select from among them such as appear to them the safest and surest, though the most unpleasant and difficult; and they employ them with all possible dexterity and prudence, with all the assiduity they are able to exert. Repeated attempts, unremitted endeavours, hard and wearisome labours, inconveniencies, sleepless nights, and restless days, are all thought
little

little of, for completing their course, and for bearing away the prize. Do we labour so for effecting our salvation? Do we so set all the means at work which God affords us for performing our Christian duties? We are well acquainted with the mark after which we should strive as children of light; and I suppose that we actually do strive after it. What do we then for attaining to it? Which way do we take for reaching it? Do we peruse and consider the Sacred Writings in pure and honest views? and do we imbibe their lessons with reverence, with avidity, with submission? Do we sedulously apply ourselves to public and private devotion and prayer? and do we this with that attention, with that humility, with that zeal, with that sincerity, the idea of the Divine Majesty, and the sentiment of our wants, should inspire? Are we constantly vigilant over ourselves and our conduct? Do we diligently labour to moderate our desires, to bridle our passions, to re-

press

press the first irregular movements that arise within, and so to acquire the command of ourselves? Do we abstain, not only from evil, but also from the appearance of it? Do we industriously avail ourselves of all opportunities of instruction, of improving ourselves, of exercising ourselves in virtue, and in augmenting the treasure of our good works? Do we scrupulously refrain from whatever may lead us aside from the path of integrity? and do we particularly avoid bad company which corrupts good manners? Do we exhort one another to perseverance in faith and in virtue? and do we hearken to them who reprove us for our faults, and correct us of our errors, with a meek and gentle spirit? These are the proper means of sanctification and happiness, which we cannot neglect without coming short of the glorious prize that is set before us. If we content ourselves with confessing Christianity with our mouths, with observing its out-

outward rites, with leading a life exempt from gross transgressions, and now and then performing a just or a generous action ; if we do not earnestly strive to discharge all the duties whereof I have just been speaking, according to the best of our power, and yet hope for the inheritance of the Saints hereafter ; then is our behaviour manifestly inconsistent, and our hope without foundation. We would reach the end without using the means whereby alone it can possibly be obtained. We would lay hold on the prize, without walking the way that leads towards it. We wish to wear the crown that is destined for the victors, and yet refuse the conflict. What contradiction ! what senseless ideas ! Are the children of this world so foolish and besotted in their way as the children of light ? No ; they do not stop at barely wishing, in fruitless resolves, in sluggish and continually interrupted endeavours ; they

they set all means to work for accomplishing their desires.

Yes, they employ all possible means for accomplishing their desires. This is the fourth feature that marks their character. They are steady in the prosecution of what they seek. They shun neither any pains nor toil the execution of their plans may require. On the contrary, they rise up early, as the Scripture speaks, and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness. They allow not every difficulty to deter them from their purpose. The greatest dangers, the most intimidating impediments, have often no other effect than to redouble their attention, their vigilance, and the exertion of their powers. They heedlessly expose themselves to those dangers, and encounter these obstacles, with boldness and resolution, though they have only, in many cases, the most distant hope of success. In vain will you attempt to persuade

persuade them to desist from their perilous enterprizes, or to moderate the warmth of their pursuits : in vain will you threaten them with pains, with sicknesses, with a premature old age, and an accelerated death : in vain will you recommend to them the comforts of an innocent, a peaceful, and an extended life, as the fruit of a different conduct. They will despise both your threatenings and your promises ; they will rather give up the most important advantages, and risk the most pungent distresses, than give up their main design ; and never will they think they have done enough, so long as any thing remains for them to do. Do we know ourselves by these lineaments, we who are the children of light ? Are we animated by such a zeal, by such a courage, by such undaunted resolution in regard to what relates to our eternal happiness ? Are we as firm and immoveable when we are seduced to iniquity, or when we meet with impediments on the

score of our duty? Do we undertake as much for Religion, and the life to come, as the children of this world do for the world and its transient goods? Do we present our God with such costly offerings, as the wordling does to his favourite passion? Do we as carefully strive to render ourselves agreeable to our Creator and Lord, to the King of kings, to him who will hereafter determine our lot, as the ambitious man does to procure him the favour of the lords of the earth? Are we as little satisfied with the progress we probably have made on the way of holiness, as the avaricious man is satisfied with the goods he has already amassed? Alas, how inconstant and wavering are we in what relates to our moral perfection and our everlasting salvation! How easily do we become weary and faint in this grand concern! We often conceive the design, of forsaking our faults and transgressions, and to devote ourselves to virtue; we often solemnly consecrate ourselves

selves to God and his service ; we then endeavour for a while to fulfill our vows ; we make some faint efforts for freeing ourselves from the tyranny of passion. But how quickly do we forget these good resolutions, these solemn vows ! How faint and ineffectual are these essays of amendment ! The first impediments we meet with make us start from the right way on which we had begun to walk. The first temptations to evil beguile us ; the first bad company we happen to join, allures us by its raillery, or by its flatteries, or by its contagious example, back again to the follies and extravagancies we had renounced but a few days, or a few hours before ; and thus we ever remain where we at first set out. What pusillanimity ! What base compliance ! Is this to be called striving to enter in at the strait gate, and to take the kingdom of heaven by violence ? Is this to be called keeping the faith, fighting the good fight,

and finishing the course? Are not the children of this world also, in this respect, wiser in their way than the children of light?

Lastly, the children of this world frequently examine the state of their businesses and affairs, and they do it with all the precision whereof they are capable. They compare that which they have already done with that which they have still to do. They observe the mistakes they have heretofore committed, and the favourable opportunities they have neglected for advancing their fortune; and are firmly resolved in future to avoid the former, and better to manage the latter. Do we also follow these dictates of Prudence, we, who should be enlightened and guided by the light of the Gospel? Do we enter into serious considerations with ourselves on the situation of our hearts and the frame of our lives; on our progress in wisdom and

virtue ; on the grounds of our hope ? To this end, do we frequently retire from the noise of the world, and allow time for this difficult and weighty concern ? But how shall we, how can we, have leisure for these transactions, if we pass our lives in a round of dissipations ; if we divide all the hours of the day between the duties of our earthly calling, and the pleasures of the world ; if we fly from solitude as from the face of a serpent ; if we dread to resign ourselves to thought and reflexion ; or, if we consume the precious moments for it, which we cannot avoid, in reading such books as may indeed amuse and distract us, but, in regard to the most important matters, leave us in the grossest ignorance and the most dangerous indifference ? It is true, there are times when we seem to confess and lament these very failings. When we meet with adverse events, or when we are preparing for the Holy Communion, then we are less distracted ;
then,

then, for some days, we alter our mode of life; then we accommodate ourselves to the occasion, and, though perhaps not without reluctance and aversion, turn over some good book; then we pass some few hours in solitude and prayer. But do we even then search and try ourselves with the attention, with the impartiality, with the severity, which alone can inform us of what we are, and what we have to hope for, or to fear? Do we not rather seek to excuse our faults, to extenuate our vices, and to set our awakened conscience again to sleep? And are these feeble attempts and endeavours to come at the knowledge of ourselves, and to begin our amendment, fully proportionate to the importance of the matter? And these exercises of devotion, which we so seldom repeat, which we perform with so much coldness, will they prove sufficient to secure us from self-deceit, and to discover to us the secret recesses of our heart, and enable us to

judge rationally whether we are in that disposition in which we ought to be, if we would be acceptable to God, and be so-
laced with his grace and favour, not only in the present, but likewise in the future life? Alas! if we would follow the dictates of wisdom, ought we not daily, ought we not very frequently, to repeat these holy exercises? Ought we not daily, ought we not very frequently, to examine our motives, our actions, the good and the ill that we have done? Can we neglect this duty without the utmost danger, we who have here on earth such great and important concerns to manage; we whose lives are so short and uncertain; we to whom the judge may, every moment, say, "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward?" Would a man of the world, in similar circumstances, and menaced with similar dangers, ever commit such gross and irreparable errors as these?

No;

No; "the children of this world are wiser," in their way, "than the children of light."

Let us then avow it, that the observation of CHRIST in our text is but too well-founded, and that our own behaviour furnishes us with the most melancholy demonstration of its truth. Nay, let us avow it, however it may humiliate and confound us, "that the children of this world," in the management of their businesses and affairs, "are wiser than the children of light." But let us not content ourselves with this avowal. The idea that we have hitherto acted so little proportionally to the wise and gracious designs of God, and no better employed the means of salvation he affords us, this idea should pierce us with the most cutting remorse, and induce us for the future to make a worthier and more faithful use of the means allowed us by the merciful God for our instruction and improvement. The prudence, the

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industry,

industry, the diligence, the firmness, we evince in all that relates to the present life, and our outward welfare, should fill us with vexation and shame at the coldness, the indifference, and sloth, with which we care for the perfection of our spirit, and for our happiness in the life to come. These considerations should inspire us with a renovated ardour, in devoting ourselves wholly to God and to Virtue, to abandon the sin which adheres to us and renders us slothful, and to run with constancy the race that is set before us. How unjustifiable will be our conduct, how righteous our condemnation, if we refuse to do, for God and for Heaven, what the children of this world do for its wretched advantages! Neither our infirmity, nor the difficulty of the matter, be they both as great as they may, can excuse any negligence on our part herein. The Christian can do all things through CHRIST which strengthens him; and the grace we are offered on the part
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of God is mighty in the feeble. The way of virtue and happiness is not more intricate, no, it is plainer, than the way to wealth, to elevated dignities, and high posts of honour. If we have light and strength enough to force a passage through this toilsome and gloomy maze, and to reach the goal, it is certainly our own fault if we have neither light nor strength sufficient for perfecting our holiness in the fear of the Lord. If we have resolution and courage enough to sacrifice, very often what we hold most dear to the world, that ungrateful and faithless despot, why should we be less resolute and bold, as often as we are required, to shew thereby our submission and fidelity to God, that we deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and lead a sober, righteous, and godly life? Certainly, if we as carefully and as constantly strive to advance the perfection of our spirit, to become wise and virtuous, and to deliver our immortal soul, as to preserve our health, our temporal goods,

and our life ; then may we rest persuaded, that we shall as surely, and infinitely still more surely, reach that aim than this. The success of the greatest and most obstinate application we can exert for acquiring what is visible and transient, is at all times uncertain, and we all must, sooner or later, lose the fruit of our labour ; but the sincere and resolute endeavours for obtaining the invisible and heavenly goods, will infallibly be crowned with the most glorious success. After all that has been said, can any doubt remain which it is that merits our principal attention, our highest affection, esteem, and ardour ? Can we still hesitate one moment in preferring to the flight and fleeting advantages of the earth, those substantial, durable, and everlasting goods that are reserved in Heaven for us, and in making these the ultimate end, not only of our desires and wishes, but also of our whole behaviour ? No ; we will from henceforth principally and constantly seek the things

things that are above, where CHRIST is gone before, and not the things that are upon the earth. We will neglect nothing for securing the inheritance that passes not away, that awaits the righteous in the celestial abodes. We will walk circumspectly as the children of light, never be too secure, constantly watch, constantly pray, and still be striving after greater perfection. Forgetting those things which are behind, after the example of that vigilant and laborious saint, we will reach forth unto those things which are before, and press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of GOD in CHRIST JESUS. May He, that powerful and clement GOD, who works in us both to will and to do, according to his good pleasure, strengthen us in these noble designs, and grant us ability to pursue them with unalterable fidelity and firmness!

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things that are above, where Christ is
 gone before, and not the things that are
 upon the earth. We will neglect nothing
 for securing the inheritance that passes not
 away, that we may be righteous in the ce-
 lestial throne. We will walk circumspect-
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 loose, constantly watch, constantly pray,
 and still be striving after greater perfection.
 Forgetting those things which are behind,
 after the example of that which is before,
 pursuing that we will reach forth unto
 those things which are before, and press
 toward the mark for the prize of the high
 calling of God in Christ Jesus. May
 I, that powerful and eternal God, who
 works in us to will and to do, accord-
 ing to his good pleasure, strengthen us in
 every word, labour, and grant us ability to
 finish the race, and to receive the crown of
 life, which is the inheritance of the saints
 in glory.

CAUTION
AGAINST
VOLUPTUOUS INDULGENCES.

Know ye not that your body is the temple of the
Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of
God, and ye are not your own?

1 Corinth. vi. 19.

CATALOG

ANALYSIS

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C A U T I O N

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VOLUPTUOUS INDULGENCES.

THERE are times and circumstances when the temptations and inducements to certain kinds of sin are more various and strong than at other times and in different circumstances. And may not this be the case with our times, and the present constitution of social life, in regard to the sins of voluptuousness, or of forbidden, unchaste love; the refinement of manners and taste; the greater sensibility towards whatever is beautiful and amiable in the productions of nature and art; the extended sociability; the universal propensity to reading; the value that is annexed to a
tender,

tender, a sensible heart; a warmer disposition to impart oneself in books and conversation; all of them things which, in and of themselves, are excellent, but which usually, though not necessarily, draw after them luxury, sensuality, and effeminacy? They may easily give to sensibility and fancy the command over reason and calm and serious reflexion. And then will the true value of things be seldom judged of and stated as it ought; then a man rarely looks beyond the present into the future; then he holds it hard to moderate his desires, to controul his affections, to refuse himself real, but not innocent and lasting pleasures; then a man easily allows himself unallowable things, deviates farther and farther from the precepts of severer virtue, and soon loses the command of himself. But, this once lost, how easily may he become a prey to his lusts, whenever favourable circumstances and stronger allurements offer! And may not this, upon the whole,

whole, be the case with the present age? May not these, not indeed unavoidable, but usual consequences of the refinement of taste and manners, display themselves among a great part of mankind now living, to their exceeding detriment? I will not peremptorily determine; but thus much is very certain, that the sins of incontinence at all times make lamentable ravages among mankind, and particularly among youth, too easily seduced; that they have always been the most fruitful source of corruption and misery, and are so now. What friend of man, what votary of God and virtue, can figure to himself their dreadful effects without inward emotion and concern! What teacher of wisdom and Religion but must wish to warn all men of this corruption; and, if he cannot reclaim the wandering, yet haply he may preserve the wavering from plunging into ruin! And this is the design of my present discourse.

Come

Come then, all you who are still in the bloom of your years, strangers and acquaintances, come and receive the warning voice of a friend, who seeks nothing more ardently than your advantage. I will furnish you with some

Considerations, which may shield you from the temptations to forbidden joys, and diminish their power. I will endeavour to strip them of their deceitful charms, to set them before you as they appear to the eyes, not of an austere, but of an unprejudiced and impartial judge. Oh, may this image be deeply imprinted on your hearts, and fill you with contempt and abhorrence for these enemies to your perfection and happiness !

Every kind of fleshly voluptuousness, enjoyed without the bands of wedlock, is manifestly at variance with the will of God, our Creator and Lawgiver, with the vocation

tion whereto he has called us, as Christians. Every sin of incontinence is a criminal act of disobedience against the Author of our lives, and the Ruler of our fates; a scandalous abuse of the faculties he has granted us; a deplorable degradation and enfeebling of our nature; a deviation from the mark of perfection and happiness that is set before us. In this respect we may address you in the sentiment of our text: Know ye not that ye are not your own, that you are the property of God? that your body and your soul belong to him? that you are to use the capacities of both, not according to your pleasure, but according to his will, and that you must give an account to him of the employment of them? Know ye not, that the God who has entrusted you with these capacities and powers, is a God of order? that he is the purest and holiest Being? that he has imparted no faculty to man, or to any of his creatures, which is not de-

signed to effect his wise and gracious purposes, to produce and to promote perfection and happiness? and that every application, inimical to these ends, either of physical or moral power, must be displeasing to him? Know ye not, that God endued you with the prerogative of reason, and thereby elevated you far above the beasts of the field, and rendered you capable of maintaining the command over yourself and your sensual desires? that however you abjure this glorious prerogative, you efface this fairest lineament of the divine similitude, you sink yourselves to the level of the irrational beasts, you even degrade yourselves below them, if, like them, you merely pursue your sensual lusts and instincts; nay, if you do, what they do not, for gratifying these instincts, endeavour to defeat the designs for which they were implanted? Know ye not, that Christianity absolutely forbids all impurity to its confessors, that it excludes the un-

chaste from the kingdom of heaven; that this divine religion, which yourselves profess, is peculiarly adapted and designed to promote in man the sentiment and preservation of his dignity, to assist him in the government of his sensual affections, to inspire him with nobler dispositions and incentives, to elevate him to a higher degree of purity and virtue, and thereby to capacitate him for a closer communion with the Sovereign Being? Know ye not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, which dwelleth in you? that, as Christians, you have already bound yourselves, first by baptism, and afterwards by the sacrament of the holy communion, to a particularly pure and holy life? that the members of your body are means and instruments for evincing and displaying, as Christians, your better, your nobler, your diviner affections, your new-acquired powers in righteousness and beneficence, in demonstrating that you are really animated

by the Spirit of God, and the mind, well-pleasing to him, which the Gospel should inspire? Know ye not, lastly, that, as another apostle says, "God dwelleth in us—that he fills all with his power and glory—that he is always with you and about you, knows all your thoughts, sees all your actions, and that he will bring all to light hereafter, and reward every man according to his works? But, can you know all this, can you believe it, and yet entertain a doubt, that incontinence is a criminal, a shameful transgression, that it runs directly counter to the will of God, and to your appointment, both as men and as Christians?

But, as the will of God is always founded on truth and order, constantly tends to the advancement of our felicity; so is it in this case also. He forbids us the sins of unchastity, because they are manifestly in opposition to order. And who can reckon
up

up all the evils, all the calamities, all the desolation, which these sins occasion in civil and domestic society? Here, innocence is betrayed, the sentiments of Religion and virtue suppressed in a heart yet uncorrupted; the peace and quiet that prevailed therein changed into tumult and furious passions; the virgin bashfulness with which it was adorned converted into impudence; the state deprived of a worthy father; a worthy mother of a family; good manners of a support and ornament; and posterity of a blessing. There, vice is encouraged, fomented, propagated, led from trespass to trespass; and with it, profligacy, corruption, and death, are disseminated upon the guilty and the innocent from generation to generation to the latest posterity. Here, all filial duty is trampled under foot, all sentiment of reverence and love towards the Author of their being, is eradicated from the hearts of youths of either sex; a blooming branch which promised the fairest fruit,

is violently and wickedly torn from the parent stock which bore and nourished its tender frame. Parents ! if ye still live, mortal affliction and distress are the portion of your cup ; your kindnesses are repaid with shameful ingratitude ; and, not seldom, must you bend under the burden of piercing grief, and sink into the grave before your time. And, if they are no more, if a merciful Providence has withdrawn them from the world before this misfortune, their name and their memory will still be sullied ; their fortunes, earned perhaps with so much toil, will be squandered away ; the education they have carefully bestowed made fruitless, and the hopes they placed on their progeny utterly defeated. There, the sacred ties of wedlock will be rent asunder, the mutual love and amity that subsisted between spouses, turned into hatred and contempt, domestic peace destroyed, the seat of repose and concord changed into a field of battle, the
natural

natural tenderness towards the children weakened and interrupted, their education and nurture impeded, their formation to virtue rendered difficult or impossible; every incitement, every encouragement to industry, to regularity, to the punctual attendance on business, lose by degrees their force; every chearful prospect of futurity fades and vanishes away; and confusion, discord, idleness, and riot, pitch their habitation where nothing but unanimity, sprightly labour, generous emulation in the discharge of duty, mutual assistance and mutual pleasure, should prevail. What disorders! what poisonous, inexhaustible sources of vice and misery!

And think not, O youth, that these are events which rarely happen, that thou shalt never perpetrate such horrors, that thou shalt never proceed such lengths. So have thousands thought before thee, who have plunged themselves and others into

the pit of destruction. When once thou hast entered on the way of vice, thou canst not tell how far it will conduct thee. Every step thou takest makes it harder for thee to return, or to keep within the boundaries thou hast prescribed to thy course.

Thirdly, Carnal voluptuousness hinders a young man from fitting himself for being useful in the world, from qualifying himself for his future office or station, and from laying a firm foundation to the happiness of the rest of his life. You clearly perceive, that you exist not merely for yourself, but also for others; that others have the same demands on your service that you may have on theirs; that you have hitherto only received, have lived merely on benefactions; and that the time arrives that you must restore the pledge, and requite by others the benefactions you have received. And how will you, how can you, do this, unless you fit and prepare yourself

self for some generally useful calling? unless you previously practise with industry what is hereafter to be your chief occupation? But shall you acquire this skill, shall you acquire it to a due degree of perfection, if you lavish away the prime of your years, the vigour of your powers, in the service of pleasure? How many hours, how many days, slide thus away, in regard to your future vocation entirely lost! How many more will be employed therein, only from necessity, constrainedly, with a distracted mind, with enfeebled powers, with much dislike? Where is the noble curiosity, the persevering industry, the chearful alacrity, the tranquillity of spirit, the unabating endeavours after the term which alone can enable the youth to acquire all the needful knowledges and insights, all the proper aptitudes, necessary to him for worthily filling his station, for the just execution of his calling? How can he stedfastly

fastly pursue any well-concerted plan, and vanquish every impediment, surmount every difficulty that rises in opposition to it? To this end he must have diligence, fortitude, a predominant taste for weighty and serious concerns, a fixt regard to the future; and all these run to ruin in the service of sensual, carnal voluptuousness. There every thing future is sacrificed to the present moment. There a man learns to ridicule every thing that is serious and important. There he sports and fools away the prime of his years and his strength. There he acquires a loathing for whatever demands pains and exertion. There he is only eager to learn what is absolutely requisite for shining in the world. Even a more refined voluptuousness, which abstains from gross excesses, presents the ordinary affairs of life to the young man's view in a false and contemptible light, as things not worth his attention and his industry, which supply no food to his acute
and

and delicate feelings. And so he enters, ignorant, or only half-informed, unpractised, or not practised enough, on the manly age; submits with reluctance to the yoke of duty; undertakes affairs which he does not understand; fills posts and offices which he has not grown up to; and must either now go through, with excessive difficulty, what he has till now neglected, or repent for the rest of his life, in various ways, the misemployment of his youth. A case that but too often happens; a punishment that commonly follows those sins.

For, and this is my fourth consideration, fleshly voluptuousness enervates a man; it renders him soft and indolent, unqualified for great and masculine undertakings, for nobler deeds, for the patient endurance of adversities and sufferings. Consider this, all you who are still in your youth; and forget not, in the enjoyment of the present, the various wants of the future.

ture. God has endowed you with powers. He requires you to exert them, and to strengthen them by exertions, but not to consume and exhaust them. You have hardly begun the course that is open before you. At present you cannot perceive the end of it; and ere you reach it, ere you get near it, you are to expect many labours, many hardships, many undertakings and performances, which require courage, and fortitude, and force. But how will you go through these labours, bear these hardships, and bring these undertakings and performances to effect? Whence will you draw the courage, the fortitude, the strength, these things require, if you now consume your powers in the service of voluptuousness, and then, with a worn-out body, with a debilitated mind, with a withered heart, enter on the manly, or the advanced age? What enemy so weak, as then will not bear you to the ground? What obstacle so slight, that will

not stop you in your course? What hardship so inconsiderable, that will not seem insurmountable to you? Every use of your still remaining force will be to you exertion; every exertion a torment. What otherwise you would have done with cheerful resolution, you will probably do with sighs and pain. Every business, every office, will be difficult to you; every duty, that calls for a vigorous nerve, will be a burden. The morning will very often affright you with the thought of the toil and affairs of the day; and the evening will upbraid you with the sad result, or the defective performance of them.

And then, if, sooner or later, you meet with dangers, with severe and trying misfortunes, if you lose your way in the labyrinths of the world; what will you do for presence of mind, for determination, for keen and constant perseverance, when both mind and body are enfeebled and unstrung? Base,
servile

servile fear, effeminate lamentations and complainings, dispiritedness and despondency, are but too often the pitiful characteristics of the man, who in his youth was too prodigal of his vigour, and held it for inexhaustible.

And is not even this the cause why great and famous exploits are not atchieved among mankind? why the generality of posts and dignities are no better filled? why none go out of the old and beaten track, and strike out new and shorter ways? why almost all men lament the hardships of their post, and scarcely any one does more than he is absolutely obliged to do? Voluptuousness and effeminacy kill every blossom of goodness, greatness, and elevation, that opens in the human soul; check all endeavours after higher perfection; and the consciousness of guilt not unfrequently deprives them of the desire and resolution to perform the little good they still may do.

do. What an irreparable damage to society ! What a loss even to him who still reforms and returns from his deviations before he arrives at an advanced age ! so much lost time and powers, so many neglected or half-done duties, so many abortive good and generous actions ; who can see to the end of their deplorable and fatal effects !

But even thy pleasures, O young man, even thy pleasures suffer thereby, and warn thee from the path of vice. Thou failest even in thy first, thy nearest aim, if thou hearkenest to the voice of forbidden enjoyments. Thou enjoyest indeed pleasure in their service ; pleasure, which beguiles and intoxicates thee for a little while. But in what form will these pleasures appear to thee, when the fumes of thy intoxication are evaporated, in the hours of sedate reflection ?—Darest thou impart them to any virtuous friend, commend and boast of them

them before him? Canst thou think on them without shame, without remorse of conscience, when thou liftest up thy eyes towards God; when thou betakest thyself to prayer, to exercises of devotion; when thou approachest the table of the Lord to make a solemn renewal of thy Christian vows! In advanced years, or in thy last sickness, wilt thou recollect them without vexation and torment?—

And, if thou partakest this guilty pleasure with a person under the sacred tie of marriage, how often must it, and will it, turn to thy deepest disgrace and confusion! How often wilt thou be forced to act the base and fordid part of a liar, a deceiver, a flatterer? how often to suppress thy most congenial, thy tenderest feelings, and to sigh under the violence thou must do thyself!

This is not all. How many far greater,
far

far nobler pleasures, must thou forego for this!—What a happiness for a youth of an innocent heart, and unspotted manners, who finds a virtuous spouse! What domestic joys, what pure and lasting pleasures, approved of his conscience, approved of both God and Man, await him! What a noble disclosure of his faculties, in perfect conformity to the will of God, and the ends of his being! What incentives and encouragements to wisdom and integrity! What joyful prospects into futurity! He has no need to be ashamed of his pleasures, never repent them, may thank his Creator and Father in Heaven for them with a cheerful heart, speak of them to all the wise and upright, and think of them with comfort in all the circumstances of his life.

But this happiness, these joys, these pleasures, are either wholly or in a great measure lost to you, who allow yourselves

to be entangled in the snares of forbidden pleasure, and waste the first and the best of your powers in the service of it. Your taste is spoiled ; your sensibility weakened ; your imagination is filled with polluted images, and your heart with corrupt desires ; the consciousness of innocence cannot animate and elevate your joys, but the retrospect on the past must stifle them often in their birth, and turn them into sorrows. What reproaches must you make yourselves, at least in secret, on the part of an innocent, an amiable wife, or in the company of a worthy husband ! How very much will these reflexions embitter those very domestic joys of which you are still susceptible !

O you, who have a sensible, a feeling heart ; you who run the risk of being seduced by sensual pleasure under the form of pure affection, of intimate connexion and communication of hearts ; think on

the future, preserve this generous sensibility in its full innocence and strength, till you have found some worthy object, till you can call it forth with the approbation of God and your Conscience, and squander not away the felicity of a long series of years in the rapid and deceitful pleasure of a few days of youth.

Lastly, voluptuousness undermines and destroys the health and the life of its slaves, and plunges them frequently, both body and soul, into the most lamentable, the most woeful condition. I know of no more deplorable sight in all nature than that of a youth who has worn himself out by the sins of voluptuousness. It is a sad disaster, when storms and hail destroy the new-sown seed, and defeat the hopes of the country-man; when the driving tempest uproots the tender plants, and breaks off the shooting scions, before they have begun to bear. But of how much greater value

is one single, wise, and upright man, than the whole of lifeless nature! How much greater and nobler is the blessing he may diffuse about him, in time and in eternity, than the richest blessings of the field and the plantation! And this whole blessing is destroyed by sinful voluptuousness; these wise and upright men are torn from the world in their youth, by becoming a prey to their lusts.

Only consider such a young man, so deeply fallen, and become so wretched; compare his former and his present condition together. How innocence, vivacity, and joy, sparkled in all the features of his face! What hopes they gave us to indulge! What performances we promised ourselves from him! With what a noble frankness he presented himself in every company, diffusing smiles and sprightliness around him! How earnestly he sought the converse of wise and upright men, and how
happy

happy was he with them ! What agreeable feelings of life and strength possessed him, rendering every duty a delight to him, every toil a pleasure !—Now, that he is become a slave to voluptuousness, now are these lovely blossoms blighted before the fruit was set. Now are the features of his countenance disguised, and his deadened eye turned downwards to the earth, expressive of guilt, remorse, and anxious sadness. In the prime of his youth, he is already become old ; still in the vigour of his years, he groans under the pains and infirmities of age. How dimly gleams his little lamp of life ! His spirit is inactive, his heart is cold, and all that fire seems near extinguished, which before was ever bursting into flame, warming and invigorating all around him ! How his force is decayed, before it could exhibit itself in good and generally useful deeds ! How shame and confusion are seated on his brow ! grief and dejection domineer in his

bosom ! How is he lost to all vivacity and mirth ! How he shuns the best and worthiest persons, as well as himself ! seeks obscurity and solitude, and is there often wrung with despair ! Ah, pity with me this unfortunate youth, all you who perceive and feel what he, what his posterity, what all human society, what heaven and earth, have lost thereby ! And oh, that this image may be deeply stamp'd on the heart of every youth that hears me, to preserve the innocent from those errors, and immediately reclaim the guilty from the ways of corruption they now pursue ! O might I but snatch one single person from the snares of seduction, and restore him to the path of virtue, or strengthen him in it, what infinite benefit should I thus do to the world !

O youth, who still canst boast of thy innocence, rejoice thou in that felicity ! It is of more value than riches and honour, more than all knowledge and science. O
preserve

preserve it with the greatest care ; it is the costliest of gems, with the possession whereof thou mayest dispense with a thousand other goods, and yet be contented and happy. It insures thee vivacity and confidence all the days of thy life. Thou wilt be able to execute many arduous and honourable exploits, which the effeminate votary of pleasure neither dares to undertake, nor is able to perform. Thou wilt triumph in existence, and diffuse much life and joy about thee.

And thou, O deplorable youth, who bearest the shame of thy lost innocence, and curstest the hours that robbed thee of it, thee will I not cast down, not bow thee deeper than the consciousness of thy folly bows thee ; no,—I would speak comfort to thee, if thou still art capable of comfort. Save whatever thou hast yet to save. Thou art fallen, but remain not on the ground. Consume not thy remaining

strength in vain remorse; recover thyself as quickly and as well as ever thou canst. If thou art to be restored, it must be soon, it must be done directly; now, while the ardent desire of help and deliverance afford thee strength thereto. God looks down upon thee at this moment with complacency, and reaches to thee his almighty arm. Lay hold on it with faith; renounce in his presence the service of sinful pleasure, and renounce it without exception or reserve: and then valiantly struggle with temptations, if thou wouldst come off with conquest. Drive off, with generous disdain, the old train of bewitching ideas and images, as oft as they approach thy fancy; enter on no parley with them, nor yet deliver them battle, but immediately turn to other and better things that demand thy whole attention. At these moments flee from solitude; seek the company of men whom thou must revere for their integrity and wisdom, and learn in their converse

converse to abominate vice, and to become enamoured of virtue. Burst the bands of friendship, the unholy friendship, thou hast formed with the voluptuous, break them once for all; avoid them who have seduced thee, or whom thou hast seduced, and converse with them no more, under any pretence, till, by reflexion and practice, thou hast brought thy good resolves to greater firmness, and hast acquired more force for putting to flight temptations. Then, but not till then, mayst thou, then shouldst thou, caution others, and strive, by admonitions, by intreaties, and by example, to rectify or repair the damage thou hast done.

And you, fathers, mothers, guardians, and preceptors, let this be your first, your greatest care, to preserve your children, your wards, your scholars, from the irreparable loss of innocence. Let them hear
nothing,

nothing, see nothing, do nothing, that may excite in their hearts irregular desires, that may render the sins of voluptuousness alluring, or make them the object of a wanton ridicule. Watch, and watch even in secret, over all their actions, over their friends and companions, their readings, and their pastimes. Endeavour to gain their confidence, and continually to preserve it, that their hearts may be ever open to you, and no passion fix itself therein, ere you have provided them with arms against it. Inspire them with a profound reverence for God, and a predominant love to goodness. This will be the safest armour for their innocence and virtue.

And let us all sedulously seek after purity and modesty. It is the dignity of the man, and the glory of the Christian. Health and satisfaction; vigour and vivacity of spirit; delight and energy in all that is beautiful

beautiful and good, that is generous and great ; long life, and pleasant prospects in the future, better world ; are its ravishing effects, its glorious, its everlasting recompence. " Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

CON-

CONTINUATION
OF THE
FOREGOING SUBJECT.

Know ye not that your body is the Temple
of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which
ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

I CORINTH. vi. 19.

CONTINUATION

OF THE

FORGIVING SUBJECT.

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CONTINUATION
OF THE
FOREGOING SUBJECT.

WE had occasion, a fortnight ago, to caution you, from the words of St. Paul, and particularly such of you as are yet in the bloom of your years, against the sins of unchastity, or forbidden voluptuousness. To this end, we laid before you the fatal and destructive consequences of these sins. These sins, we told you, are in opposition to the will of God, our legislator and judge; they are in opposition to what we are, and ought to be, as men and as Christians. They degrade and disgrace our nature, and strip us of the noblest privileges we possess as men above the irrational animals, and as
Christians

Christians above other men. They are in opposition to the order and the benefit of human society; corrupt innocence, and promote vice; dissolve the bands of filial duty, and of conjugal love; and spread the dreadful devastation and havock far and wide.— They prevent the young man from qualifying himself for rendering service to the world, for his future post or condition, and from laying a firm foundation for the happiness of the subsequent years of his life. They enervate the man; make him languid and inactive, unfit for great and laborious undertakings, for noble achievements, for the patient endurance of adversities and sorrows. They procure him pleasures which are extremely deceitful, which must often perplex and afflict him; and at the same time deprive him of far greater and purer pleasures, which he might enjoy with a tranquil heart, which he might rejoice in before God and Man. They, lastly, sap and destroy his health
and

and his life, and often plunge him, body and soul, into the most wretched and deplorable of all conditions; plain considerations, which, if we are still capable of any sentiment of truth and goodness, and of reflexion, must represent forbidden voluptuousness to us as the most inveterate enemy to our perfection and happiness, and fill us with detestation and horror at it. I have likewise cause to believe, and to thank God for it, that these considerations have already produced such effects in several, by either confirming them in their good dispositions, or awakening them to amendment. To the purpose of invigorating both the one and the other in pursuing the path of virtue, and for facilitating to them the victory over temptations, I have devoted my present discourse. I shall, namely, supply all those who wish to live innocently and chastely, or, which is the same thing, happily, with some rules, by the observance whereof they may

maintain their innocence, or restore themselves to their lost liberty, and avoid the sins of incontinence.

Indeed, on this matter I can say nothing but what has already been often, and often much better, said. But probably to many the present may be the lucky moment, when the truth they already know may find admission to their hearts; and, if this should happen to be the case with but some few of my young auditors, how successful shall I think my efforts! how blessed shall I esteem my discourse!

Would you, then, preserve your innocence, and avoid the sins of unchastity; then earnestly habituate yourself to moderation in all things; moderation in eating and drinking, moderation in regard to rest and motion. If you would have order to prevail in your thoughts and desires, then likewise must there be order in the movements

ments of your body. Without this order, the former will not long subsist. Mind and body compose one whole ; and each remarkable alteration in this brings on an alteration in the other also. The youth, who accustoms himself to an effeminate life, pampers his body, sleeps away the morning hours, makes abundant use of inflaming liquors, and has not learnt to refuse any thing to his palate, is already half undone. Does he give full scope to his sensual propensities in these respects ; then will he find it difficult to restrain them when they urge him to fleshly indulgence. Temptation will fall on him unarmed, and, accustomed to conquer, will plunge him into sin without much opposition. That this may not happen to you, strive to maintain the command over your sensual desires, to maintain it continually, and in regard to all things. Subdue and mortify your body, that it gain not the upper hand, and become an implement of folly and vice.

Be temperate in every thing that may occasion irregular, violent emotions in it, that may offuscate the light of your mind, and facilitate to your sensual feelings the ascendancy over the suggestions of your reason and conscience. Let not chance, opportunity, or the company wherein you happen to fall, but wisdom, and the love of innocence, determine the disposition of your life; establish in these respects certain rules for your conduct; let these rules, though they seem to relate, as it were, only to trifles, be sacred and inviolable to you; and stop rather on this side of the boundaries of moderation, than ever transgress them. Think not that herein I ask of you too much, that I require of you more than you are able to perform. How! If formerly the competitors at the Grecian games, who contended for a corruptible crown, for an empty and fleeting applause, if they refrained from so many things, denied themselves so many pleasures, and led

a life that was indeed extremely austere ; shall you be able to do nothing, to relinquish nothing, to dispense with nothing, for the prize of a healthy body, a vigorous mind, a chearful spirit, a quiet conscience, a brisk old age ! for maintaining the dignity of a rational creature, and a real Christian ! for securing the approbation of your own heart, nay, the everlasting and ever-blessing applause of God ! No, no ; shame and reproach before God and man must be the punishment of him who disdainfully rejects such goods, who refuses to do any violence to himself for the sake of such distinctions, and to purchase them with the dereliction of sordid and quickly evanescent pleasures !

Would you preserve your innocence, and avoid the sins of unchastity ; then let me recommend to you, secondly, diligence and industry, an active, busy course of life.

Stated employment, to which a man is early accustomed, and for which he has a taste, partly on account of its nature and mode, and partly from its future utility, is the best security against the follies and extravagancies of youth, as well as the best, nay the only defence against languor and ill-humour, repinings and disquietudes; vacant hours, hours that have no regular and fixed destination, in which a man can do every thing, and yet seldom knows what he will and ought to do, which soon grow burthensome, which we readily devote to any person, any company that will take them off our hands, and promises to fill them with pleasures. For the sake of killing time, a man exposes himself to the danger of killing his reason, and, rather than be dull, he will be a fool, he will be even wicked. Therefore let these vacant hours and intervals of business be as few as possible. Assign to each its stated occupation, or its innocent and elevated pleasures, before it arrive,

arrive, that it may never hang heavily on you, nor become a prey to wantonness and seduction.

Think not, that in so doing you will never enjoy your life, or that your powers will sink under such continued application. A youth who preserves his innocence, who lives temperately and chaste, may perform a great deal without hurting his health. Labour to him is a pleasure; and the changes of it, the variety and diversity of the affairs he transacts, is actual recreation to him. And when I recommend diligence to him, I would not that he should always be employed in matters that require exertion; or that he should pervert the order of nature, and deny himself sleep and refreshment; or that he should renounce all the pleasures of social life. I only desire, that he surrender neither his employments, nor his pleasures, to accident alone; but that he chuse and regulate them

both by just and solid principles ; that he so settles and determines the application of his time, as that he may be able to bring it to an accurate account. And thus alone will he certainly rejoice in his life, and in the years of his youth. He will apply them to the purposes for which they are designed. He will exhibit and exercise his powers in the properest way, strengthen them by practice, and be ever approaching near the mark that is set before him. How grateful is the thought of a well-spent day ! With what satisfaction and alertness of mind a man looks back on such a day ! How composedly does he lay himself down in the arms of sleep, and how refreshing is the sleep which useful application, and not foolish prodigality, of strength brings on ! How disagreeable, on the other hand, are the feelings, how perplexing the ideas, when the close of the day is come, and a man knows not how he has spent it, what he has executed in it,—and he must account

it

it absolutely lost, or be ashamed of it, as only marked by follies!—And one day of early youth, how great is its value! How much greater and more irreparable its loss than the loss, not of one, but of several days, nay, several weeks, of mature or of advanced life!

A third rule of prudence, for preserving innocence, and for avoiding the sins of unchastity, is this: Abstain from whatever may incite the sensual instinct, the impulse to voluptuousness, how innocent soever it in and of itself may be, and harmless also to others; abstain so long as you cannot gratify this instinct in a lawful manner. Among the things that may prove dangerous to youth, I reckon the drama, in so far as it sets in motion the passion of love in innocent, youthful hearts, and this at the very time, and the very circumstances, when this passion, for want of worthier objects and nobler nourishment,
may

may easily misguide the unhappy breast wherein it rules to the most degrading excesses. I am no enemy to the stage. I know its value : I know what it might be, and what it might effect, if it constantly and in all respects was what it ought to be. I perceive, with conviction, what a powerful means it might be, and what in part it actually is, of inspiring the spectator with noble sentiments ; of supplying food to the feelings of his heart ; of waking many a dormant faculty in his soul ; of promoting compassion, philanthropy, magnanimity, and the knowledge of mankind ; of displaying the charms of virtue, and the infamy of vice ; of inciting and kindling the sentiments of natural freedom ; of stigmatizing the powerful that abuse their power, the man that acts unmanly, the freeman who thinks like a slave ; and deliver up to opprobrium and laughter many faults, which neither the laws of religion nor society can restrain or chastise, and which

which yet disturb the order and the pleasure of society, and may even be attended, by morally bad effects, and, by holding up such faults to scorn and ridicule, may bring them into disrepute. All this, undoubtedly, may good plays produce; and they would produce it in a far more eminent degree, if a greater strictness was observed in regard to their selection and the whole of their contents. But to the youth who possesses a very sensible and tender heart, who is easily susceptible of violent passions, who is, therefore, by his complexion, designed for the enjoyment of a tender, connubial love, but cannot yet enjoy that happiness, to him I give this advice: that he be very moderate and circumspect in the use of this otherwise allowable recreation. I advise him to avoid every thing, and to abstain from every thing, that may too much inflame his otherwise generous and innocent propensities, that may give them too strong a nourishment. He is

certainly always a loser; he is even a loser though he preserve himself from criminal actions. Wants arise in him, which he cannot satisfy; and these wants are a torment to him, make his present condition uneasy to him, deprive him of all inclination to serious affairs; and, dissatisfied with himself, and with the world, he perplexes himself with dreams of happiness, out of which he must, sooner or later, awake, but can never awake without confusion and horror.

For the same reasons I caution you, O you who wish to preserve your innocence! I caution you as much, and still more, against the reading of such writings as, by alluring descriptions of voluptuousness, put the still uncorrupted reader to the blush; and, if he follow not this kind suggestion of innocence, soon will the lurking seeds of sensual lust begin to appear, his imagination and his blood to
grow

grow warm, and either lead him directly into the way of vice, or call him to a conflict with himself and his rebellious desires, in which he will rarely come off with advantage. Refrain, I repeat it once more, refrain from the reading of such writings, if you wish to preserve your chastity; and the more spirit and vivacity there is in the style, the more perfect and captivating they are, as works of art, the finer the covering, the more guiltless the form under which they conceal their voluptuous contents, be so much the more on your guard against them, as you will assuredly so much the less avoid the danger as you think it to be more remote.

Would you maintain your innocence; then, fourthly, beware of the false shame of being, and of being reputed, innocent. Oh, what lamentable devastation has this false shame occasioned among mankind! What numbers of virtuous, ingenuous youths,

youths, have been rendered by it a prey to their lusts, the slaves of vice! Unacquainted with sin, and its deceitful charms; such an one has walked the path of duty and virtue, enjoyed the happiness of a quiet heart, discomposed by no guilt, of a silent and orderly life, shocked at every irregular emotion that arose within him, and shunned with detestation every company where he might be liable to be tempted to evil. But now he has the ridicule of his young companions to encounter: they pronounce him simple; regard him with scorn; ironically pity his ignorance and inexperience; accuse him of weakness, of an excessive scrupulosity, of an unnecessary conscientiousness, of an unsocial, misanthropical deportment; encourage him to a frolicksome life, to enjoy his freedom, to open his heart to pleasure: and now—his virtue staggers; shame gets the better of him; he dares not venture to be better than others, or even to appear so; and,

and, by too strenuously endeavouring to avoid this appearance, actually ceases by degrees to be so ; yields first in things that are of but little moment, and then in matters of great importance ; sees the follies that others commit, and sees them at first with dislike and aversion, next with indifference, afterwards with approbation, and at last falls into the very same extravagancies and follies.

Oh, arm yourselves against this mistaken shame ; it poisons, it blights every germ of goodness in the heart it once pervades ; it despoils a man of his freedom, degrades him to a slave, and makes him incapable of whatever is generous and great. How ? You are ashamed of being more innocent and virtuous than others of your age and station ; why then are you not ashamed to excell them too in health, in strength, in riches, in understanding, in science ? Are Wisdom and Virtue alone no real, no
estimable

estimable advantage? Are they not the health of the soul, the strength of the spirit, the best application of the intellect, the noblest fruit of science, the only good that properly belongs to man, and which he carries with him through the grave and gate of death into the eternal world? How? Shall those things be your disgrace, which in all ages, among all nations, have been ever accounted the glory of youth and of men, which make the Christian, which are agreeable to God your Creator and Lord, and secure you his applause, which procure you the victor's wreath at the awful day of judgment and of retribution! No, no; if still any generous ambition glows within your hearts, if still you are warmed with any feeling to the beautiful and great; then must innocence and virtue be sacred to you, then must you revere them as the noblest prerogatives of man. And, if you possess these prerogatives, the consciousness, the inward sentiment of
your

your dignity, and your happiness, should set you far above their contempt, and deprive the ridicule of the light and vain of all its force !

The fifth rule of prudence : Beware of the first false steps and deflections. On this extremely much depends ; with most men all depends on this. Think not to say to yourself, that you will enjoy this or that sensual pleasure, that you will moderate yourself in the enjoyment of it, not allow yourself to be wedded to it, will keep from the pernicious consequences of sensual pleasure, renounce it at the proper time, and always preserve your liberty of returning back to the strictest rules of temperance and order, so soon as circumstances and duty require it of you.—This is the language of levity and rashness. He that thinks in this manner has lost his innocence ; he is secure from no excesses, however great. Trust the sad experience

of so many unhappy persons, who held the same language before you, set bounds to themselves in the same manner, sinned with as much circumspection and caution, were as little disposed as you to plunge headforemost into profligacy, or to cut off all retreat to virtue, and yet soon forgot all these fine rules of circumspection, forced every boundary they had prescribed, have utterly lost their liberty, and plunged into the woofullest bondage! No; the first step to vice you may avoid, and easily avoid. This once taken, it is highly probable you will take the second, that you will make farther and farther advances on the way of vice, that you will perish in it. Your innocence once lost, with it you lose your principal strength; you lose the sentiment of your dignity; you lose the abhorrence you had for sin, and with them the most powerful restraints of virtue. The desires are now got into disorder; the conscience is violated; the peace of the heart is disturbed;

turbed ; passion is raised, but not satisfied ; the poison of sin tastes sweet ; new and stronger desires are kindled ; they promise pleasures unalloyed ; danger appears at a distance ; liberty seems preserved : and so one sin, the man always grows more indifferent and insensible to Religion and virtue ; the frequent repetition of sin brings it into a habit ; and he finds himself at length so entangled in its snares, that he is forced to obey it even when he sees its deceptions, and groans under the yoke of its sway. Thus it is with all kinds of sin, but chiefly with the sins of voluptuousness. Here all pliancy is extremely dangerous : here the question is not about moderation, but abstinence.—Are freedom, and virtue, and happiness, really dear to you ; then beware of every thing that may bring them into danger. Accordingly, beware of the first false steps and deflections, however inconsiderable they may seem, since every thing tells you that you will not stop there,

since you never can know how far they may lead you. And, if you would not do wrong, then beware of whatever may smoothen the path that tends thereto; then combat every evil thought, suppress each irregular desire, as soon as it rises within you. Every moment in which you indulge such thoughts, cherish such desires, makes it more difficult for you not to commit the evil act, whenever opportunity and allurements offer.

Would you preserve your innocence, and avoid the sins of unchastity; then shun, in the sixth place, the company of the flighty and vicious, and seek the intercourse of wise and virtuous persons of your own, or of a riper age. On the habitual company of youth depends the formation of their character and manners; very often their present and future happiness depends upon it. Their soft and yielding

yielding heart takes all impressions; is open to whatever seeks admission; is disposed to familiarity and confidence; easily allows itself to be swayed by others; forms itself readily on the model of others; and but too often takes the voice of the seducer for the voice of a friend. O guard your heart from these mistakes, all you to whom innocence and virtue are not empty names. Lavish not your first, your warmest sentiments of friendship on the undeserving. Be strict in the choice of your companions, if you would not hereafter be forced to detest them as enemies and corrupters. Try them first, before you make them your intimates and confidants. If you find them indifferent towards Religion and virtue; if you hear them speak without reverence, without seriousness, of God, of Christianity, of immortality, of the future state; if you hear them deride the most important, the most sacred concerns; if you hear and see them treat sin and vice

as trifles, as nearly indifferent things ; and make the trespasses and faults of their acquaintances and friends an object of their mirth : then shun them as men unworthy of you, and whose converse can only be hurtful to you. It is absolute temerity to expect to remain innocent in their society, and to preserve your heart and your morals from turpitude and stains.

Seek rather to connect yourself with persons of your own standing, to whom Religion, and virtue, and immortality, are still important and sacred, whose uncorrupted heart is keenly sensible to the difference between right and wrong, rejoices at the sight of the former, and regards the latter with detestation and abhorrence. So will each afford warning and security to the other, each encourage the other to perseverance in the path of virtue. If one of you stumble, the other is at hand to keep him ; and every one, by the example
and

and assistance of the rest, approaches far more rapidly and successfully to the point of perfection.

At the same time acquire freedom of access to persons of maturer age, whom you respect for their wisdom and probity. Your connexion with them, and the desire of preserving their approbation, will make you more attentive to yourself, more circumspect in your whole behaviour, and particularly in the choice of your associates ; and nothing will be a more powerful defence to you in the hour of temptation, in those dangerous moments, when your sensual appetites rebel, and would cast off the yoke of Religion and Reason, than the calling up their image, the image of Wisdom and Virtue, to your mind, or the running to them, and in their presence lamenting your weakness, and in learning to feel the dignity as well as the

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happiness of virtuous friendship that has been tried and confirmed.

Take, seventhly, oh you who earnestly desire to have a clean heart, and to pursue an honest course, take Religion to your assistance. She is the faithfullest guide and protectress of the innocent; the strongest support of Virtue. All her doctrines, all her precepts, all her promises, have this in view, to direct our propensities to the best and worthiest objects, to free us from the sway of sensuality, to assist our rational spirit in gaining the command over sordid appetite, over animal instinct, and to inspire us with the love of order, of purity, and holiness. She calls to us all in persuasive accents: Forget not, Oh man, that thou art not wholly dust; that thou art far superior to the beasts of the field; that thou art related to spirits, and art formed in the likeness of God; that thou art not designed for a mere sensual and animal, but
for

for a rational and virtuous life ; that thou art designed for immortality. Forget not, oh Christian, that thou confessest the purest, the holiest doctrine ; that thou art related to JESUS, and art a joint-heir with him ; that thou art called to a higher degree of purity and holiness, than the rest of mankind who are not Christians ; and that thou renderest thyself unworthy of this name, and losest the eminent happiness annexed to it, unless thou crucifiest the flesh with its affections and lusts, and strivest after a clean heart, and an unspotted life. Hearken then to the voice of Religion, and follow her animating call, if you wish to preserve your innocence, and to conquer the temptations to sinful pleasure. Make yourself thoroughly acquainted with her doctrines, her precepts, her promises, her sense and spirit, that she may appear to your mind, in the hour of temptation, as divine, infallible truth, may dispel with her light the charms of sin, and animate you with
her

her power to conflict, and to triumph.—
To this end, addict yourself to devotion,
to silent meditation on God and his will,
to prayer, to self-examination, to reading
the Scriptures and other books that
awaken the sentiments of piety; that
the doctrines of Religion may not be
unfamiliar to you, not indifferent, but
ever closer, ever more firmly connected
with your other ideas and feelings, and
may even then conduct and govern you,
by their secret influence, when you are
employed in quite other affairs.

Strive particularly to keep up vigorous
sentiments of the omnipresence of God.
Walk, as the Scripture says, always be-
fore him. Accustom yourself constantly
to regard him as the inspector and re-
warder of your conduct. Meditate fre-
quently in this manner: The God by whom
I am and live, in whose hand are all my
fates

fates and fortunes, on whom my whole felicity depends ; who encompasses me at present with love and benificence, and who hereafter will be my judge ; who knows, and sees, whatever I think, and desire, and do ; who disapproves and abominates whatever is contrary to purity and rectitude ; and I can only then promise myself his approbation and pleasure, when I use my body, as well as my soul, according to his will, and conduct myself in all respects by the laws of chastity and order. Have I to struggle with myself, to enter the lists with sin ; this conflict is carried on under the eyes of my Sovereign Ruler and Judge and he will hereafter pronounce sentence on the faint-hearted as well as the brave, on the victor and the vanquished. If you set thus the Lord alway before you, nothing will cause you to shake, nothing can divert you from the path of duty and virtue.

Are

Are you, however, not got so far in piety ; is meditation on God still strange to your spirit, or not intimate enough ; you cannot always render it sufficiently perspicuous and forcible : then supply this defect, in some degree at least, by sensible representations. Deeply imprint on your imagination the image of some generous friend and benefactor, the image of some particularly respectable person, whom you highly esteem and love ; accustom yourself to ask your heart, on all occasions, what would this friend, this guide of my youth, this upright, this honourable man, say of it ? Would he call my purpose, my behaviour, good, or would he disapprove it ? Would his unexpected entrance upon me, in this temper of mind, in this employment, rejoice or confuse me ? And lay it down as a law to you, to do nothing that you would not do in his presence, that you would not venture to relate to him, which you may not expect him to approve. Such

an image of integrity and virtue, continually floating in your mind, attending on you in company and in solitude, how often will it caution you, how often encourage ! how often deter you from an evil action ! how often help you to conquer both yourself and the world !

Would you, lastly, preserve your innocence, and arm yourself against the sins of interdicted pleasure ; then frequently and seriously reflect on the future, on the sequel of your life ; contemplate and pronounce on the present in its connexion with the future. The omission of this rule of wisdom is certainly one of the principal causes whence it happens that the inconsiderate youth so easily entangles himself in the snares of pleasure, and is carried captive by it. He looks at the present alone : he thinks and lives as if he had only a few years, only a few days, to live ; as if this part of his life was
entirely

entirely detached from the rest, and stood in no connexion with it at all; or as if he had more than one course to go through, more than one mark to prosecute, more than one measure of human power to abuse; as if he might now act thus, and then quite otherwise again, at pleasure; might be a fool for the present, and then a philosopher as soon as he chuses. O my young friend, let not these errors beguile thee. It has plunged thousands before thee into ruin. All the parts of thy life compose but one whole; they are indissolubly woven together, most intimately relate to each other. In the present lie the foundations of the future. According as thou usest that, accordingly will these be framed. The former is a moment, the latter may comprise a long series of years.

Forget not that the days of youth do not last for ever, that they are soon gone
by;

by ; that thou art to be a man, a father of a family, perhaps an old man ; that, in all these periods of life, thou hast need of force, of chearfulness, of courage, if thou wouldst discharge thy obligations and be happy ; and that thou must then be deficient in all these things, that in thy manly and more advanced age nothing but infirmity, languor, disgust, dissatisfaction, and pusillanimity await thee, if at present thou squanderest away thy powers in the service of voluptuousness.

Wouldst thou act wisely, and construct thy happiness on a firm and lasting foundation ; then often say to thyself : The present is not the time of enjoyment, — enjoyment would be now a crime, — but the time of preparation for future and legitimate enjoyment. I am now to gather forces for my riper years, for my advanced age ; force for discharging all my duties, for the enjoyment of every harmless comfort,

fort, for bearing the inevitable burdens of life; force, that may not abandon me in the midway of my course, but enable me to hold out to the end. I must now learn to controul myself and my desires, if I would not be for ever a slave. I see, in the sequel of my life, pure and noble pleasures, of a spiritual and even of a sensual nature, before me; which I will not embitter by excesses, which I will not spoil and unfit myself for by the abuse of my youthful years.—I see still another life before me, after the present, which stands in the closest connexion with it, and which promises unalloyed eternal delights to those alone who exercise themselves in abstinence here, and so obtain the victory over themselves and the world. And shall I deprive myself of these delights for low and sordid gratifications? Shall I think I purchase this happiness at too dear a rate, if I now do some violence to myself, keep a rein upon my sensual propensities, and give up
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a few fleeting, deceitful pleasures? No, no; I will strive, and not be weary of the contest till I have obtained the victory. The struggle itself is honourable, and procures the combatant the approbation of God and of his own conscience. And how glorious will be the triumph, how sweet the fruits of conquest!—Happy the youth, happy the man, who thus thinks, and follows these maxims of Wisdom! Innocence will be his lasting fame; satisfaction and happiness his everlasting portion!

a few shining, decorated pillars; No, no: I will drive, and not be weary of the contest till I have obtained the victory. The struggle itself is honorable, and how could the combatant the approbation of God and of his own conscience. And how glorious will be the triumph, how many the links of conquest. — Happy the man, happy the man, who thus thinks, and feels, loves these maxims of wisdom! Innocence will be his lasting fame; satisfaction and happiness his everlasting portion!

CAUTION
AGAINST
SOME FAULTS
IN THE
EDUCATION OF CHILDREN.

Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of
the Lord.

EPHESIANS, vi. 4.

C A U T I O N

ACCEPTEE

S O M E T I M E S

I N T H E

E D U C A T I O N O F C H I L D R E N

By the Hon. the Secretary of the
Board of Education

C A U T I O N

AGAINST

S O M E F A U L T S

IN THE

EDUCATION OF CHILDREN.

EVEN with the best instructions, and the most ardent pains to bring a matter to complete effect, and entirely and conscientiously to discharge our duty, we may yet commit mistakes, various mistakes, that are in manifest opposition to our good designs, and more or less frustrate our most strenuous endeavours. The matter itself that we propose, the affairs that we carry on, may be very

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intricate

intricate and difficult; the prosecution of it may require a degree of attention, of spirit, of activity, beyond what we are masters of; or we may meet with outward opposition, outward impediments, which we did not foresee, and to the conquering whereof our powers are deficient. We are ourselves, and ever remain, very limited beings. We do not always perceive each particular object that relates to the business. We are too prone to dwell on what is nearest, on the present, and but too easily drive off the future out of sight. We frequently consume all our time, and all our powers, on some single parts of the matter or business that are more easy and agreeable to us, or are more in unison with our propensions, and treat them just as if they composed the whole. Not unfrequently do we allow ourselves to be cheated by appearances, or implicitly follow the example of others, or are tired and worn-out with stemming the torrent of difficulties. No wonder if we
often

often fail in what we are the most solicitous, in certain respects, to avoid mistakes and failings.

Thus it is with the education and nurture of children. What matter can be more urgent on parents and teachers, what employment can be of greater importance, than the education and nurture of their children and pupils? How great and extensive are the consequences of every fault they may commit in this concernment! and how careful should this render the considerate and honest preceptor to avoid as much as possible every fault, and to discharge his duty in the most conscientious manner! And perhaps there never was greater attention and care bestowed in certain respects on this important subject than in our days. Never did it appear, at least among certain ranks and classes of men, that they were less sparing in the pains and expences required for developing and

adorning the minds of children, and for forming them to polite and refined manners. And never perhaps was there so plentiful and so early a harvest of this kind of fruit as in the present times. Never perhaps were the various sorts of knowledge and ingenuity, with such complacent and engaging manners, in the first periods of life, so common as now. But, whether human society has greatly in general gained thereby; whether the next generation of men will be wiser, more virtuous, more contented, more happy, more generally useful, than the present is; whether the fruits of the greater cares in education will be lasting; these are questions which only the experience of future times can rightly answer. Hopes for the best may and ought to prevent the zeal of educators from ever growing cold. In the mean time, thus much is certain, that not seldom the best exertions employed in this design, if not absolutely fruitless, are yet productive of

no considerable effects. It is impossible therefore but some faults must be committed herein, which often frustrate the views and exertions, the legitimacy and goodness whereof are not to be called in question. And thus in fact it is: We hold the business of education for important, we prosecute it with seriousness and zeal, we spare neither pains nor expence, and yet frequently accomplish but little with it all. We sow good seed, and yet often gather but little ripe fruit therefrom. Wherefore this? Because we allow ourselves to be surprised and blinded by faults, which are too common for us to be always on our guard against. Permit me to-day to offer you some caution against a few of these faults.

The precept of our text is universal. "Bring up your children," says the Apostle, "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" bring them up as Christians, as men
that

tha are capable of a greater perfection, who are designed, not merely for the present, but also for a superior life. The more general duties of education contained in this precept I circumstantially delivered to you. At present I shall confine myself to the giving of some friendly admonitions and cautions to parents and educators, who think the matter of so much consequence as to pursue it with real earnestness, which may bring to their notice, and guard them against certain, as pernicious as ordinary, faults in the business of education.

Take heed, in the first place, lest, while you cultivate and form the exterior of your children, or your pupils, you neglect to cultivate and to form their interior, their mind and their heart, or even by the former do injury and mischief to the latter. Gentility of carriage, refined and pleasing manners, a good deportment, are undoubtedly

doubtedly of great value; they contribute very much to the entertainment of company, and to the pleasure of social life. But in education they are very unimportant, unessential things. These advantages will and must ever be the fruits and consequences of a good education, but they never need be treated as important and essential parts of it. If you bring your children, or your pupils, too early to this point; if you make it too serious a business to them; if you lay too much stress thereon by praise and blame, by rewards and punishments; you will do them far more harm than is commonly imagined; you thereby hinder their natural and moral formation; you arbitrarily set bounds to the free course of their spirit, and the leisurely development of their capacities and powers; you debar them from seeing with their own eyes, and from thinking and acting by their own feelings, and in a

short

short time render them, of free-born creatures, the wretched slaves of fashion, and the tools of prejudice; you thereby enervate and poison the blossoms of frankness and sincerity; and accustom them, on the other hand, to reserve, to disguise, to falsehood; and by all this furnish them with means of imposing on you and others, the use of which will cost them but little pains, and by which they will soon learn how to conceal from you, and from others, all their actual faults and obliquities. Inspire them rather with discreet, benevolent, and tender dispositions towards all men; teach them to esteem and love all mankind, without regard to rank and station; teach them to be complaisant, serviceable, helpful, beneficent to all: so will they assuredly not be deficient in such qualities as will make their social intercourse pleasant and desirable. And when once they are entered in the great world, as it is called, there is no fear but they will soon learn the prevailing

wailing modes of it, and perhaps but too soon adopt them. Happy, if they never give into them without reserve, never degrade themselves into blind copiers and imitators of others; but so maintain the dignity of human nature, as to diversify and augment the pleasures of social life.

Observe farther, you that are parents and preceptors, that you do not confound instruction and education together, or take the one for the other. No, instruction is not education; and if it belong to it, yet is it certainly not the most essential, the most important part of it. I can conceive of the most excellent, the most successful education, without peculiar instruction; and the careful, most solid instruction, without actual education. As they are but too frequently divided asunder, so much more frequently are greater attention and pains bestowed on the former, instruction, than on the latter, education. The former, in-

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struction,

struction, may easily be given by others, without personal exertion and pains; the application employed in it strikes the senses; the progress made in it is visible; the fruit of it is reaped immediately; fruit which a man not seldom ascribes to his own merit, though he has merely purchased it by his affluence. Proper education, on the contrary; the formation of the heart; the habituating the child, or the pupil, to veracity, to justice, to equity, to kindness, to diligence; the habituating him to virtue and piety, which can rarely, and never entirely, be left to others, which are confined to no particular times and places, which demand an uninterrupted attention and care, an exertion and patience of which only parental affection is capable; it advances but slowly; it is not the work of a few years, but the whole of the first period of life, and its desirable consequences often do not appear till a long time after. But which of the two is now the most important,

portant, instruction or education? which want may most easily be supplied in after-years by personal industry, the want of instruction, or the want of education? How difficult is it found to dismiss the depraved and bad habits a man has adopted in his childhood! and to practise the virtues which he has never seen others practise, or has even seen them despise! And how easy it is, on the contrary, to acquire the knowledge and insights which a man has hitherto had neither opportunity nor direction for acquiring! No; this is a demonstrated maxim of Wisdom: A child that remains ignorant in most things, but is preserved from depravity, and brought up to integrity and beneficence, to the love of God and man; that child is far better educated, and will, by his education, be far more useful and happy, than another whose mind has been ever so carefully formed, but whose heart has been surrendered to impetuous passions, and to bad propensities.

ties. No science can counterbalance the want of virtue ; and though that may be learned at any period of life, yet this is chiefly the fruit of early application.

This leads me to a third suggestion, apparently no less important. It relates to the proportion of instruction, and the degree of knowledge, most adapted to your children and pupils. All are not capable of the same illumination ; all are not designed for the same stations and offices in the state, and in civil society. We may here as easily do too much as too little : and it is a prejudice no less hurtful than common, to imagine that we can never know and learn too much, and never be too eager in acquiring talents and accomplishments. This but too often happens in our days, and is a fruitful source of dissatisfaction and want of happiness. Certainly, too much knowledge, too diversified knowledge, too much merely speculative knowledge,

ledge, which only lies dormant in the mind, all that wherein you frequently so much rejoice, and on which you bestow so much time and expence, is very often far more detrimental than profitable to your children, if it be unsuitable to their situation in human and civil society, to their future destination, and to their worldly circumstances. What now in the generality of cases—and the sensible man will only reckon on these—what in the generality of cases will be the consequences and the use of the great cultivation they have received, and the knowledge and accomplishments they have so painfully acquired? Either, in the limits assigned them by their station and mode of life, they absolutely cannot use and employ them at all, they will find them an incumbrance, and lament the waste of time and trouble; or they allow themselves to be carried away by the predominant propensity they have acquired to them, and

by that means neglect the most important duties of domestic and social life. They are often informed and expert in every thing, except the proper affairs of their station and calling, which they neither understand nor love. It is not unusual, for the want of opportunity and means of following their propensity, and of distinguishing themselves by their talents, to make them dissatisfied, fullen, and wretched. They reckon themselves ill-used and degraded, on being forced to addict themselves to mechanical labours, or to other employments which require nothing more than bodily strength and a sound understanding. Accordingly, they discharge their duties with reluctance, discharge them by halves, abstract themselves from them as soon and as often as they can : and who is able to describe the multitude and the magnitude of the evils they thus bring upon themselves, and upon so many others as are connected with them in domestic

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and social life? In all these cases, the ignorant and less-cultivated man, but who understands the affairs of his calling, and seeks his pleasure and his honour in the due prosecution thereof, very far surpasses them in utility and happiness.

Beware, fourthly, you who have the welfare of your children and pupils at heart, beware of too much refining their taste, chiefly and particularly in regard to eating and drinking, to cloathing, to furniture, to every thing that relates to conveniency and ornament. Beware of sharpening their sensibility too much towards whatever is good and better, whatever is bad and worse, whatever is beautiful and less beautiful. If you would not have them tempted to dissatisfaction at the generality of things that surround them, or that they meet with in life; if you would not have them wretched themselves, or the cause of wretchedness in others: then must they

very often, then must they usually be satisfied with that which is not bad, which is moderately good, but which might have been far better. They cannot, they ought not, always to chuse; still less should they always require the best and most beautiful, and complain at the want of it, or hold themselves injured at its being withheld. They must, in most cases, take and use both men and things as they are, and put up with them as they find them, without repugnance, with all their faults and imperfections. This is the surest, the only method of chearfully enjoying the great abundance of the beautiful and good which is to be found in the world, and among mankind, with all their defects, and thereby to promote our own and the general happiness.

Teach this betimes to your children and pupils, ye parents and preceptors. Teach it them especially by your own example.

Be

Be not fastidious, not difficult in the choice and the use of what belongs to food and raiment, and to outward decoration. Let not prejudice and fashion, but sound understanding, and the true nature of the case, direct and determine your judgment therein. Require not more from the things and men, wherein you are concerned, than they are and may afford, according to their nature, in their situation, and in their circumstances. Impute not too highly to others their failings and weaknesses, never require from them virtues that are above the ordinary pitch of humanity, and always respect the limits which nature has assigned both them and you. Be content with the good, when the better is denied you; with the needful, when you cannot have the convenient or the agreeable. Form not your children, your pupils, for a world that nowhere exists but in books, or in your own over-weening imagination. Form them for

the actual world, for their, for your world, for the men with whom they are to converse, for the society wherein they are one day to live and act.

In short, let children be children; and young people, young people: let them think, and judge, and act, conformably to their age; impute not to them, as crimes, the defects and innocent sports of that period of life; much rather have patience with them, and take part in these. Require not of the child the riper judgment of the youth, and of the youth the steady carriage of the man. Thus will you not do violence to their nature, not give a distorted bias to their capacities and powers, and not bring them up to be mere mimics and imitators of others, or base and servile hypocrites. Fruits that are produced in the hot-house seldom attain to their full maturity and growth, and still seldomer preserve

serve their natural taste in its genuine purity and poignancy. No; education does not imply to prescribe arbitrary laws to Nature; but to attend circumspectly to all her precepts, to all her suggestions, and to be led and conducted by them. Education does not imply to check and disturb Nature in her course and operations; but to facilitate them to her, to invigorate her powers, to remove the hindrances she meets with, and to bring the young one, that has been tempted to forsake her path, back to it again.

These are the suggestions and cautions by which I would call your attention to some faults which are but too common and hurtful in the business of education. May you all, who would have this business be at once a duty and a pleasure, not only confess and feel the justness and the weight of these suggestions, but also be thence

impelled to hearken to the voice of Truth!
and, enlightened and attended by her, to
combat and to conquer every prejudice,
however authoritative and prevalent it
may be!

168 CAUTION AGAINST SOME FAULTS, &c.
impelled to hearken to the voice of Truth
and, enlightened and assisted by her, to
combat and to conquer every prejudice,
however entrenched and inveterate it
may be.

OF THE
PRINCIPLES

OF THE
REFORMATION.

Prove all things : hold fast that which is good.
1 THESSAL. V. 21.

[illegible]

OF THE

P R I N C I P L E S

OF THE

R E F O R M A T I O N .

NOTHING degrades a man more than when he acts in opposition to his own perceptions and principles, and thus in fact denies and combats what he holds to be true in his mind; and yet nothing is more common than this contradiction. Nobody doubts, that a greater good is to be preferred to a less, a solid and ever-during advantage to one that can last but a short time; that on frequent occasions we should not avoid a small and quickly-passing evil, but voluntarily take

it on ourselves, for the sake of escaping a greater and far more lasting evil. And yet we daily see such numbers of men acting as if the reverse of all this was true, by sacrificing the grace of the Most High to the favour of mankind, the bliss of heaven to the fleeting pleasures of sense, and by rather exposing themselves to dreadful punishment in the world to come, than lay any restraint at present on themselves, and combat with some ardour the difficulties they meet at first setting-out on a conscientious and pious course. And whence proceeds this contradictory behaviour? We do not frequently and forcibly enough represent to ourselves the right principles on which we ought to act; we do not sufficiently accustom ourselves to recollect them on all occasions, and apply them to what we have to do or suffer; or we do not proceed carefully and impartially enough in such application. We form our resolves upon the first impressions that outward

ward things make upon us, without giving time and scope to reason for adjusting their value according to the rules of sober judgment. Let us at present make use of these extensive remarks in examining the principles on which the Reformation is founded.

A work of such vast importance to the Christian world as the Reformation is, should certainly at times engage our reflexions, since it may be considered in various points of view, from every one of which we may receive instruction. We often boast of it, and that deservedly, as an extraordinarily estimable instance of the bounty of God; we reverence the memory of those persons whom Providence made use of as its instruments in this work; we approve, at least in the main, of their undertakings and labours; we admire their courage, their intrepidity, their zeal, their fortitude; we believe that they acted on
right

right principles; we maintain these principles against the enemies of the Reformation, and account ourselves happy in being Protestant Christians; and in all this we do nothing but what is just and reasonable. But, in all the rest of our judgments, in all the rest of our conduct, do we follow the principles on which the lawfulness of that Reformation is founded, and on which we justify it to the world? Here the contradiction between the perceptions and actions of mankind, we spoke of above, but too plainly appears. It is no unusual thing to blame in our times what, in regard to the times when improvement in belief took place, must be allowed to be laudable; we at times deny those liberties to Protestant Christians which, as it was then maintained with justice, no man ought to be denied; we are in general indifferent towards matters which then were held, with reason, to be of the highest importance, and for the
acqui-

acquisition whereof our forefathers neither shrunk from toil nor danger; we but too often omit to use advantages, the importance whereof alone can justify the zeal with which they were then acquired; we, in fine, rejoice that we stand in the path that leads to the knowledge of truth, and will not, or do not, venture to advance farther on that way, and to prosecute and carry to greater perfection the noble work the Reformers so happily begun. Are not all these so many manifest contradictions? Must they not necessarily degrade and disgrace all such as make themselves guilty of them? Let us act more rationally and more consistently. To this end, let us examine the principles whereupon the lawfulness of the Reformation rests, and by which the Reformers acted. To elucidate and demonstrate these principles, and to rouse us to a behaviour conformable thereto, is the chief design of my present undertaking; and, as the precept of our
text,

text, "Prove all things : hold fast that which is good," takes one of the foremost places amongst these principles, you will readily perceive the reason of my laying these words before you.

Let us first state somewhat more precisely, and explain, the subject we mean to handle. By principles of the Reformation we understand those truths or doctrines of Holy Scripture on which the lawfulness of the forementioned correction of belief is grounded, without the knowledge and pre-supposition whereof it could never have been effected, and with which it must either stand or fall; the doctrines by which the Reformers found themselves incited to their arduous and perilous undertakings, according to which they set themselves to work, with which they defended themselves against their adversaries, and evinced the reasonableness of what they required; doctrines, in fine, which we cannot gainsay, and

and which we cannot act contrary to, without insulting the name we bear of Protestants and Reformed, and relinquishing the advantages we possess as such. And what are now the doctrines which we consider as so many principles and supports of the Reformation?

The first is this: Truth and error in religious matters may by no means be indifferent to man, whose greatest prerogative is reason. He must strive to know truth, and to avoid error, because the former promotes his perfection and happiness, and the latter may have a very pernicious influence on his conduct and his welfare. Truth shews us all that can be hurtful or profitable to us, that deserves our esteem or our abhorrence, our love or our hatred, as it actually is: error gives all these objects a foreign and deceitful aspect. The former leads us, by a smooth and luminous path, to the end for which we were

created ; the latter removes us, by a thousand dark and crooked turnings, ever farther from it. The former has order, harmony, virtue, and quiet, for its attendants ; the latter is accompanied by confusion, discord, contradiction, vice, and uneasiness. And ought we then to be indifferently disposed towards truth and error ; and, above all things, in religious affairs, that is, in matters that far excell all others in importance ; in matters that relate to the will of God, our supreme legislator and judge ; our behaviour towards him, and our everlasting portion ? What elevates us more above the irrational part of the creation, than the capacity of knowing our Creator, and of having fellowship with him ? And should we leave this capacity unemployed, and so render ourselves unworthy of the place we fill on the scale of things ? No ; truth and error, if we know how to prize ourselves, and would be happy, must not be indifferent to us ; and the greater and more

more important the objects of our knowledge, the more ought we to care about the truth of them. And was it not this principle that, at the time of the Reformation, excited so conspicuous an eagerness after better instruction in religion, in such a number of persons solicitous about their salvation, and impelled many of those who had more light and discernment than others, to impart their perceptions to others, and to cause their light to shine before them? Were truth and error in religious matters things that might be indifferent to mankind, which stood in no particular connexion with their perfection, their comfort, and their happiness; then all the pains at that time employed in bringing truth to light, and in resisting error, were not only for the most part thrown away, but were even detrimental, since it could not be done without great toil and danger. If, however, it be of vast concernment to mankind, which no

one can deny, to endeavour at a just knowledge of God, and his will, and the way to happiness, to be sure of our Faith on solid reasons, and neither to flatter ourselves with idle hopes, nor to be tortured with senseless fear; if we are prevented no less by unbelief than superstition from attaining the ends for which God has placed us on the earth, and from being so good and so happy as we may and ought to be: then must we affirm those pains and endeavours to be lawful, laudable, and generous; then are we greatly beholden to the persons who applied themselves to them, undergoing so many labours, and encountering so many difficulties, even though they may not have reached all the aims they had in view; then, in fine, are those endeavours likewise at present proper and useful, and we should contradict these first principles of the Reformation, if we either blame others because they seek to enlarge the boundaries of

of religious knowledge, and deter them from so doing; or if we ourselves, from indolence and love of sensual pleasure, are contented to remain in ignorance with regard to these things, or are satisfied with a very erroneous and unsettled acquaintance with them. Would we support the character of rational creatures, the character of Protestant Christians; then must truth, and particularly the truth of salvation, be dear to us above all things; and we must spare no pains, shun no labour, no hazards, which may help us to the knowledge of it. Though we are most strictly enjoined forbearance towards the erroneous; though we are not allowed to hate, or to persecute, or to injure, in any way whatever, such as are in our opinion mistaken; though we are bound to practise towards them all the duties of friendship and affection which are due from us to other men and Christians; yet we are not permitted to be indifferent towards error.

We must rather always be endeavouring to improve and rectify our knowledge, and also to be helpful to others in such pursuits as we have talents and opportunity thereto.

The second principle of the Reformation, the second doctrine on which the lawfulness of it rests, is this: Every man is allowed, and, if he has capacity for it, is bound, to examine the doctrines of Religion for himself, and to judge of whatever is true or false therein. Religion is designed for all men. It is no science, merely belonging to the learned, or consisting in unprofitable and subtle questions, of no other use than to employ the heads of the idle, and to give them an opportunity of exercising their ingenuity, and nourishing their pride. No! it is a matter that infinitely concerns us all; in regard whereof no one can remain in ignorance or doubt, without damage. And shall I, in a matter which
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is so closely connected with my happiness, on the knowledge whereof all my comfort in this world, and all my hopes in the next, depend; shall I implicitly submit to the opinion and the sentence of another? Shall I not venture to examine whether the doctrines I am to believe are founded in truth? whether the duties imposed on me are actually enjoined by God? whether the hopes held out to me are such as I may safely rely on, and comfort myself with? Is the reflection, the consideration, the circumspection, which are in all things relating to this life, and to my outward well-being, becoming, laudable, and necessary? and when the question is concerning affairs, that, in greatness and importance, as far transcend these, as eternity transcends time, shall this reflection, this consideration, this circumspection, be needless, or even audacious and criminal? What folly should I be guilty of, what a risk should I run by so careless and inconsiderate a procedure in

matters of such high importance! Here we may apply the words of the prophet: "Woe to the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm!" What! oh, indolent Christian! thou that shunnest all examination and reflexion, and trustest blindly to another, and this other is probably a hypocrite, who does not himself believe what he teaches thee, who is prompted solely by the fear of disgrace and punishment, or by the hope of gain, to deliver thee the precepts and doctrines he does! How! thou submittest implicitly to another; and this other probably submits as implicitly to the authority and decrees of a third; and this third, without examination, follows a fourth, who is even as careless and indifferent as thou; and so the blind are always to be leading the blind, and it is from good fortune alone if they do not all fall into the ditch. No! God has given me eyes, that I may see for myself; understanding and reason, that I may judge
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for myself. He has given me his word, that I may inform myself of his will; and he has caused this word to be delivered, for the most part, by unlearned persons, in an atlefs and simple style, that it might be level to the capacities even of the unlearned, and be adapted to their own uses. The means for acquiring the knowledge of the necessities and essentials of Religion are common to us all. A sound intellect, a sincere affection for truth, an humble and a teachable heart, a mind unfettered by prejudices, and a spirit free from irregular and furious passions, a serious endeavour to follow the truth when known, and to reduce it to practice; these qualities, these dispositions, enable and fit us more for the study of the doctrines of salvation, and how to frame our behaviour so as to render it agreeable to God, and conducive to our everlasting happiness, than all kinds of literature, if unaccompanied by those qualities, or, as but too often

often happens, if attended by their contrary failings, and thus rendered unserviceable or even prejudicial to us. Those among Christians, who were formerly called Laics, have therefore the same right, and are under the same obligations, to investigate the doctrines of Religion, to consider and to judge of them, as they who are denominated the clergy and the learned; nay, they not unfrequently meet with fewer hindrances, in doing so with good effects, than the latter. Agreeably to this principle, the Reformers thought and acted, since they not only tried themselves the then prevailing usages and maxims with a spirit of liberal enquiry, and encouraged all men to do the same; but even put the Scriptures into the hands of the common people, that they might thence learn for themselves what right and wrong, what truth and falsehood, is. Agreeably to this principle, thought and acted all who embraced the Reformation, from discernment
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and conviction, and promoted this salutary work by their approbation, by their authority, by their writings, or by any other means. They saw the absurdity of the blind credulity which had so long filled the place of a rational certainty; they grew ashamed of the servile chains with which they had tamely submitted to be bound; they cast them from them with just indignation; they began to think for themselves, and accordingly to inspect what they had hitherto admired and revered without foundation, to strip it of its specious garb, and to conceive of things as they actually are; and thus came, by little and little, to discriminate between error and truth, and to be sure of their belief. And agreeably to this principle must we also think and act, if we are desirous of maintaining the honour of rational creatures and Protestant Christians. Whatever reasons we may have for reposing confidence in our teachers, and for favouring

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ing their instructions with our attention, when we see, by their words and works, that they are actuated by an unfeigned love of truth, of virtue, and integrity; yet must we still, after the example of the Bereans, who are therefore praised in the sacred writings, and termed noble-minded, compare their discourses with the contents of the word of God, and prove them thereby. The Apostle enjoins every Christian to "prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good." And, in another place, he says, "I speak as to wise men: judge ye what I say." "Believe not every spirit; but try the spirits, whether they be of God." Even the dread of striking into by-paths ought not to deter us from this private examination; it should only induce us to be discreet and wary. God never allows him, who busies himself sincerely and earnestly about the truth, to fall into any destructive error: of this we may confidently assure ourselves from his wisdom

wisdom and goodness; and even if we should mistake, in our honest diligence in the discovery of truth (an imperfection unavoidable in our present state!); yet we may always be assured, that God will not impute to us these unintentional errors; and that he will, even notwithstanding them, have a greater complacency in us, than in those slothful Christians who shun such inquiries, and who, either from the love of ease, or attachment to sensual pleasures, rely altogether on the perceptions of others, though they should accidentally have the luck to keep free from all mistakes.

The third principle of the Reformation is this: Sound reason and the Holy Scriptures are the only rules, for distinguishing truth from error in Religion; they are the sole means for becoming sure of our Faith. And, in fact, where else shall we look for certainty, if we are not to find it there?

By

By what standard shall we try the maxims of Religion, if we are not to examine them by these? Shall we let our judgment hang on the decisions of other persons, or of whole societies of men? But what man, what society of men, can arrogate to themselves a right to infallibility? Should we not, at least, have an express and clear revelation of it from God, that he has granted this prerogative to certain persons, or to certain societies? and that it is his will, that we should absolutely, and without contradiction, submit ourselves to it? But where is this revelation to be found? where is this command of God to be met with? Does he not himself refer us every where to his word? Does he not require us to meditate day and night therein, to look upon it as a clear and steady light, and comfortably to trust to its direction? Is not he, who does so, pronounced to be blessed? Or shall we try the truth of the dogmas of Religion by their antiquity, without farther inquiry?

inquiry? hold for true whatever our forefathers held to be true many centuries ago? and peremptorily reject, as false and erroneous, whatever they either knew nothing of at all, or of which they formed other ideas than we may do with greater lights, and more sufficient means? But, by this mode of arguing, would not the heathenish superstition and idolatry have the first and best right to our approbation and reverence? And can truth lose any thing of her inherent, her eternal rights, by prescription? Is it impossible for it to have been suppressed by the ignorance, the carelessness, the selfishness, and other corrupt passions of mankind, and not till after many fruitless attempts to have conquered all these obstacles? On the other hand, does a proposition, the justness of which no man has once doubted of for a length of time, but which also during that length of time no man has impartially and freely discussed; does that proposition become

come thereby demonstrated? Does error therefore cease to be error, because no one for a long time has ventured, or has even been able, to transpierce the venerable obscurity wherein it was involved, and which procured it respect, and to contemplate it in its hideous nakedness? Is the tyrant therefore a lawful sovereign, because he has long domineered, with uncontrouled and unlimited sway, over the miserable beings whom he had subdued by force or fraud, and whom he has deprived of all spirit, by cruelty and oppression, to examine into the ground of his decrees, and of their obedience?—Or shall we, in fine, judge of the truth of the dogmas of Religion by the greater or smaller number of those who profess them, and hold them to be true? Has error then never once gained the upper hand? Has it not still, at present, far more followers than truth? Do not the confessors of Christianity compose by far the least part of the inhabitants of the earth?

earth? Is it not very often, nay, is it not usually dangerous to follow the multitude; the multitude, which for the most part is made up of unreflecting, sensual men, who think merely on their temporal affairs, or on their pleasures, who but too seldom glance at the question, "What is truth?" or hold the answer to this question as quite uninteresting, or as a matter that only concerns the learned; who therefore but too readily submit to be guided by others, and think it like meddling with matters out of their province, if they should interfere in what does not immediately relate to what their minds are wholly bent on, and wherein they seek their whole felicity; who care for nothing beside, so they are left undisturbed in this? Says not our Saviour likewise in this respect: "Straight is the gate, and narrow" "is the way, and few there be that find" "it?" No; neither the authority and the degrees of men, nor the antiquity of a dogma, nor the multitude of its professors,

can be of any service to us as a rule in the investigation of truth ; and, if we use it to that purpose, we constantly run the risk of falling into error, or plunging into confusion. Nothing but the proper use of Reason and the Sacred Writings can lead us with any safety ; they alone are able, and ought to decide of what is true and false in Religion. To this they are appointed of God ; and to this are they also completely adapted. On these principles the whole lawfulness of the Reformation rests. On these principles the Reformers justified themselves entirely from every accusation of being actuated by a spirit of turbulence and innovation that was alledged against them. By means of these principles they overthrew many errors that age alone had rendered sacred, divested them of their surreptitious honours, and drew many an important truth to light which had been buried in a cloud of darkness for hundreds of years together. Were they called to
dispute

dispute of the assumed infallibility of the Bishops of Rome, of the declarations of this or that celebrated teacher, of the decisions of antient or modern councils, of long-derived customs, of the power and the multitude of those who belonged to the prevailing party; to all this they only opposed Reason and Scripture, as the only standard of Truth; and Reason and Scripture again received, in a considerable part of Europe, that reverence that was their due, and which had been so long denied them.

And this reverence must we too shew them, if we would justly bear the name of Protestant Christians. We are not to receive or to reject any dogma, merely because it is either old or new, because it is believed by a great or a small number of persons. We are not to hold mere human compositions, and therefore also no confessions of Faith compiled by ordinary

men, as infallible declarations of truth; and these compositions, these confessions, can only so far bind us, as they consist with Reason and Holy Scripture. By this rule must we prove all things. But, for doing this, we must exercise our reason; we must accustom ourselves to meditate on the doctrines of Religion, to compare them together, and to form clear and consistent notions of them. We must diligently peruse the Sacred Writings, and sedulously use the means that may make the knowledge of them easy to our minds. We must read and consider them often, with attention, with impartiality, with an honest heart, and in sincere intentions, not only to know the Will of God, but likewise to do it. What will it profit us else to know the maxims of Truth, and to have them in hand, if we do not use them, and know not how to employ them? And oh, how wide are we in this respect of the zeal of our fore-fathers at the time

of the Reformation! How ardent were their longings after the Word of God! how highly did they prize it! To what dangers did they not expose themselves, at times, for the sake of hearing it, of reading it, and getting it into their possession! Now, when this sanctuary stands open to all men; now, when it is not only allowed, but even encouraged, when it is enjoined us as a duty, to make a diligent use of these treasures of divine information, and when all the means are at hand in abundance to facilitate the employment of them to us: now, from the conduct of men, it but too often appears as if they dare not read these sacred books, or could not read them; they let whole weeks, whole months, elapse, God knows whether many may not pass whole years, without taking in hand these holy records, and striving to instruct and edify themselves from them. Is this to demean ourselves like Christians, like Protestants? Is it not much rather to

be called contradicting manifestly the principles of Christianity and of the Reformation? Is it not much rather to be termed, leaving unemployed the noblest freedom we possess, and which our forefathers bought so dear? Is it not to be called, despising the most estimable gift of God, and after which so many nations sigh in vain, and rendering ourselves unworthy of it? Oh let us better understand the value of this gracious present of the Providence of God, and more worthily use it, lest, as a righteous punishment for our ingratitude, it should be at length withdrawn, lest we should be deprived of the light by which we are now enlightened, and be forced to walk in darkness! Let the Holy Scriptures, which alone can make us truly wise, be our most precious book, and the contemplation of it our chief concern! This our duty demands; and the compliance with this duty is our happiness.

There

There are still other principles on which the legitimacy of the Reformation rests, and which may likewise serve us for a model. But the time will not allow us to consider them now. We must therefore postpone the elucidation and application of them to some future day.

OF THE REFORMATION

There are still other principles on which
the efficacy of the Reformation
and which may be said to have
produced it. But the time will not allow
of their being now. We must therefore
leave the elucidation and application
of them to some future day.

The Reformation was a great
event in the history of the
world. It was a time when
the Church was purified and
the people were brought
back to the true faith.
It was a time when the
light of the Gospel was
spread over the whole
world. It was a time
when the power of the
Church was restored and
the people were brought
back to the true faith.
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OF THE
P R I N C I P L E S
OF THE
R E F O R M A T I O N.
IN CONTINUATION.

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive : but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.

EPHESIANS, iv. 14, 15.

OF THE
PRINCIPLES
OF THE
REFORMATION
IN CONTINUATION.

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EPHESIANS, iv. 14-15.

OF THE
 PRINCIPLES
 OF THE
 REFORMATION,
 IN CONTINUATION,

RECOLLECTIONS of great events, that have contributed to the welfare and improvement of mankind, are attended with two important effects. They awaken our sensibility to the benefits they have occasioned, and have a tendency to inspire us with such dispositions, or to confirm us in such dispositions, as are adapted to the share we take in those transactions, and the

the advantages we obtain thereby. The recollection, for instance, of that great work of Providence, the Reformation, reminds us, at the same time, of the great advantages that accrue from that conjuncture to the Christian Church, in regard to our knowledge, our worship, and our liberty, which we have now enjoyed for considerably above two hundred years, and for which our thanks are due to that astonishing event. This recollection must likewise serve to confirm us in the love of truth, of Christian freedom, and of reasonable worship; and excite us to the imitation of that goodness and generosity which we admire in the Reformers, and their help-mates in that glorious cause; and animate us to persevere in the wise and Christian principles on which they undertook and pursued that work. To promote this last-mentioned object, is the design of my present discourse; and our text consists of the very doctrine that applies
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to the purpose. According to which, we are no longer to be children, or weak beginners in knowledge, but to be ever striving after improvement in it: we are not to allow ourselves to be imposed on by others, and seduced into error, or to be unsettled in our faith, which we must ascertain to ourselves on solid reasons: we are to adhere to the truth, but, at the same time, maintain it in love. These doctrines of the Apostle we may regard, together with several others, as so many principles of the Reformation, and in this point of view we shall consider them at present. It is now two years since we took occasion to begin the discussion of this important subject, of the principles of the Reformation; and I hope that the present continuation of it, under the divine blessing, may not be without its utility.

However, we must first briefly recapitulate what we mean to imply by principles
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of the Reformation, and shew how far we are advanced in the consideration of them. By principles of the Reformation we understand those truths or doctrines of Reason and the Sacred Writings, on which the lawfulness of the forementioned amelioration of belief was grounded, without the knowledge and presumption whereof it could never have been brought about, and together with which it must either stand or fall; those doctrines, by which the Reformers found themselves excited to their difficult and painful enterprises, by which they set themselves about it, with which they defended themselves against their opponents, and evinced the reasonableness of the demands they made; those doctrines, in fine, which we cannot deny, and which we cannot oppugn, without contradicting the name we bear of Protestants and Reformed, and renouncing all claim to the advantages we as such possess. Such doctrines or principles now
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are various. In our former treatise on this matter, we adduced and demonstrated three articles of this kind. The first was : Truth and error, in matters of Religion, ought not to be indifferent things to men, whose greatest prerogative is reason and the knowledge of God, and who are bound to search after truth, and to strive at avoiding error. The next was : Every man is justified [in investigating for himself the doctrines of Religion, and in judging of what is true or false therein ; and, if he has capacity for it, it is his duty so to do. The third was : Sound reason and Holy Scripture are the only rules for distinguishing truth from error in Religion ; they are the only means for becoming sure of our Faith ; and neither the authority of men, nor the antiquity of the dogmas, nor the multitude of their professors, can decide in these concerns. Let us now go farther, and bring other five doctrines forward, which are equally principles of the Reformation

formation with those, and deserve, as such, to be upheld.

I. The first is this: No man, and even no society of men, is competent to impose dogmas on the consciences of their fellow-beings, the truth of which they do not perceive: this is undeniably a principle of the Reformation. If the reverse of this proposition were true; if certain persons, or certain societies among Christians, had actually the right to prescribe rules of faith to others, which in and for themselves, and without regard to the arguments whereon they rest, were obligatory to them: then would all that Luther, Zuinglius, and the other Reformers, have attempted and done, for improving and enlightening their Fellow-christians, be unnecessary and unlawful: then would all the inquiries they set on foot and occasioned, into publicly received doctrines, be contrary to law. For, the church had already
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long ago pronounced a decisive sentence on all the aphorisms and rites of Religion, either by their pretended sovereign bishop, or by numerous assemblies of their teachers, and issued these decrees to all Christians as commands they were peremptorily bound to obey. This claim they likewise strove to maintain during the times of the Reformation. They rejected and condemned every doctrine and opinion, that was not conformable to their edictual precepts, as dangerous errors; they excluded all, who believed and taught them, from their communion; they vexed them with spiritual and personal punishments; and forbade them all hope of happiness: they would allow of no new examinations, but exacted a blind and unconditional obedience. Against these tyrannical requisitions, the Reformers stood forth. They examined into the grounds of this pretended unlimited authority over the consciences of men, and found them extremely weak,

and quite insufficient. They argued for the freedom, which cannot, without absurdity, be refused to any man, to any Christian; the liberty of thinking for himself, of judging for himself, of proving all things, and holding fast only what he found to be true and good. They taught, that God alone had power over the minds and consciences of men, because God alone can know the frame and faculties of the human spirit; and alone can truly ascertain whether any one be fond of truth or error, whether he thinks and believes in this way or another from infirmity or from malice, with innocence or with guilt. This justified them in rejecting all forms of doctrine, that were violently imposed on them and their disciples, as so many chains of bondage, and in yielding only to such arguments as they saw the force and justice of themselves. And when they likewise afterwards themselves composed and published certain doctrinal formularies

or confessions of faith, they had it by no means in view, at least at first, to bind thereby the consciences of men, or to ascribe any kind of infallibility to themselves. As little did they intend thereby to establish an uniformity in public discourses for their own, and much less for all succeeding times. They only designed to declare against the gross errors, and absurd opinions, and senseless tales, they were ordered to adopt; to invalidate the false accusations of their opponents; to explain themselves more clearly concerning the principal abuses they wished and endeavoured to rectify or remove; and to furnish them with means and opportunity for composing and settling their faith, who, during the late violent disputes, were ever wavering between truth and error, and unresolved which side they ought to take. To this end was the famous confession of Augsbourg designed; Zuinglius's confession of Faith; and other declarations of a simi-

lar nature. If, in more modern times, men have been desirous to raise these or other confessions into absolute obligatory precepts; if they have been given out for complete and unimprovable compendiums and institutes of Christian doctrine; has every departure from them, or every fresh examination of their contents, been declared a juridical matter, or even a heresy; has this use of Christian liberty been attended by punishments, and the privation of civil immunities: then, in these respects, have the Protestant principles been forsaken; the principles with which the lawfulness of the Reformation must stand or fall. Let us constantly uphold these principles; for they are founded in the nature of man, and ever bring honour to Christianity, which always seeks the light, and invites enquiry. Let us never erect ourselves into judges over the consciences and the faith of our Fellow-Christians, or lay burdens on them which would fit
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heavy on us. Every one of us, says the Apostle, shall give an account of himself to God, and shall bear his own burden. Let us not be the servants of men, but of God. Let none of us, the teacher no more than the hearer, seek to lord it over his brethren; let none of us take upon him the mastery, for only one is our Master and Lord, even Christ. Let us rejoice in the light of truth that enlightens us, and faithfully use it; let us cause it to shine before others, but not obtrude it on any. And as we are to apply ourselves daily, according to the doctrine of our text, to improve in the knowledge of God and of CHRIST, and constantly become more sure of our Faith; so neither then let us thwart others in the sincere endeavours they exert in this behalf, much less impute it to them as a crime, and at all times to teach and maintain the truth, that we may ever be advancing in love.

P 3 II. Another

II. Another principle of the Reformation is this : It is not enough that we know the truth; but we must likewise confess it by our words and works. In speaking here of truth, I understand by it important doctrines, which have a great influence on the moral behaviour of mankind, and on the tranquillity of their minds, to the utter exclusion of all abstruse and unprofitable speculations, all hypotheses and opinions, which the learned alone can understand, and judge of, and rightly use; and which can make the bulk of mankind neither better nor happier, though in other regards important, and to other persons, and may be deserving of a curious examination and careful preservation. Such dogmas and opinions, or such particular modes of explanation and statement of certain dogmas and opinions, we even need not publicly confess and maintain at all times and in all places : we should thereby frequently occasion more detriment than advantage ;

advantage; confuse the congregation of God; grieve our weak brethren; and impede the progress of actual belief, and practical Christianity. In regard to such things, it is sufficient that we neither say nor do any thing that militates with our knowledges and perceptions, and may give offence to honest Christians. But, in regard to those important doctrines which every man should know and believe, if he would live as a Christian, suffer patiently, and die in peace, it is our duty, not only to understand the truth, but freely and on all proper occasions to confess it, both in word and deed: this the reverence we owe to truth demands. If we hold it to be what it is; if we feel its entire value, and believe it with full assurance; if we experience its efficacy, and its comforts; it will not easily be possible for us so to speak and to act as if truth was of little moment to us, as if it were still doubtful to us, as if we could at any time dispense

with it. No; we shall account it our faithfullest guide, our best friend, and our only comforter; and who can stand in such relation to it, and be ashamed to avow it on all occasions, and publicly to make it his glory? This also sincerity requires, which is such an essential requisite in the character of the upright man. His words must tally with his thoughts; his actions with his propensities and views. His outward deportment must be a faithful index to his mind; and the more important the matters are with which he has to do, so much the less can he fail in this accordance. This, lastly, the love we owe our neighbour claims: we are to consult his edification; we are to confirm him, by our example, in his belief of the truth, and in his love of virtue; we are readily to impart to him, not only of our earthly, but also of our spiritual goods; and to be equally helpful to him in the acquiring or securing of what rejoices and comforts us.

us. But how much should we act in opposition to these duties, if, by suppressing or denying the salutary truths we possess, we should lead him into error and sin, or render the truth more indifferent and doubtful to him than it would otherwise be ! We are therefore bound to the open confession of truths that so much concern ourselves and all mankind, and to act conformably with these confessions. This obligation the Reformers plainly perceived ; and to their zeal in complying with it are we indebted for the great advantages of improvement in the Faith, and in the Church they brought about. They did not content themselves with having more just perceptions of religious matters, and the privileges this gave them above the rest of mankind, for themselves alone, or with enjoying them in the company of a few familiar friends. This silent pleasure would have given no provocation to any ; they would have continued to enjoy all the
benefits

benefits of peace and of outward fortune ; but their brethren would have been neither the better nor the happier for them. Of such selfish and pusillanimous sentiments were in general the philosophers of antiquity, that, from the schools where they had been combating the prevailing superstition, they repaired to the temples of the gods, and assisted at their ceremonies with apparent devotion. But of such selfish and pusillanimous sentiments were not the Christian Philosophers who undertook and promoted the work of the Reformation. They resolved to communicate to others the light that enlightened them : they resolved neither mediately or immediately to minister to error and vice : they resolved to admit no doctrine which they did not believe, and to observe no rites and ceremonies which they saw to be unbecoming and hurtful : they demanded the liberty to speak as they thought, and to act conformably to that which they held

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to be true; and this liberty they had a right to demand. In vain were threats and punishments employed to deter them from confessing the truth. They firmly stood their ground, and shunned neither pains nor dangers, for giving testimony to the truth. Let us imitate their generous example. The obligation is the same to us, as rational creatures, as Christians, and as Protestant Christians. The truth that makes us wise unto Salvation should ever be dear to us; and all our words and works should declare aloud to all men how happy we esteem ourselves, that we are acquainted with it. Never ought we to be induced, from the fear of man, or from an unseasonable complaisance, to contradict our consciences, and to pronounce that to be true and good which our understanding assuredly knows to be false and hurtful. Constantly should we labour, with no less zeal than prudence, to promote wholesome knowledge and generally

rally useful truths; and never spare ourselves in detecting such errors as are detrimental to real virtue, and the comfort of our brethren, how numerous soever be their followers and friends.

III. From these two principles of the Reformation, which are, at the same time, principles of reason and Christianity, there naturally results a third, which is no less firm and immoveable. It is this : All persecution on account of Religion and Faith is irrational and unchristian. For if, on one hand, no man is authorised to impose dogmas on the consciences of his fellow-beings, the truth whereof they do not perceive; and if, on the other hand, it is our duty to speak and to act in conformity with our perceptions, and publicly to confess the truth we know : then are all compulsory methods in religious matters, and all punishments inflicted on the erroneous, nothing else than utterly unjust attacks on the
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the freedom of conscience, which every man, and every society of men, of right possess. And how little penetration is necessary for perceiving the absurdity of all kinds of persecutions and violences in matters of religion! Can I, as a reasonable being, give my assent to a doctrine, and receive it, if I do not discern the truth of it? And can I discern the truth of it, if I have not sufficient reasons for it; if I do not perceive its connexion with other axioms I have already made out; or if I do not feel the importance and force of the reasons propounded to me for the demonstration of it? Or does it always depend on me, does it often depend merely on me, to give my thoughts and ideas that degree of perspicuity, precision, and justness, I am desirous of giving them, or which they must have, if I would conceive of a matter otherwise than I have hitherto done? How deep do the causes frequently lie concealed in my nature, that occasion
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me to conceive of it as I do, and no otherwise, in the frame of my body, in my earliest education, in my outward circumstances, in the whole combination, and the various relations, of all my other conceptions and ideas! And can threatenings, can punishments, and compulsory methods, alter the nature of things? Can they give me more light and certainty, than calm, and sedate, and continued reflection? Must they not much rather render that, which men would recommend to me as true and good, suspicious and abhorred? Can my spirit act unimpededly, can it chuse from reason and conviction, if fear and terror, indigence and danger, accompany it at every step it takes?—Or do I deserve to be punished and ill-treated, if I should actually miss of the truth? Who ever thought of punishing the poor, the sick, and the blind, because they were poor, or sick, or blind? Who does not prefer truth before error? Who does not hold his error
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for truth? Who has ever loved and supported error as error? If I err, it is a misfortune for me, but not a crime; then I deserve compassion and mild instruction, but not punishment. Does another walk in light, and I in darkness; does he proceed along the right path, while I pursue a by-one: then has he reason to rejoice in his advantage over me, but not the slightest cause to hate and persecute me on that account: he is justified in giving me friendly admonition; he is bound to warn me of my mistake; but he has no right to compel me blindly to follow in his footsteps, and to allow myself to be guided by him. And how manifestly do all kinds of persecution for Religion and conscience-sake militate against the esteem and affection that one man owes to another! with the sentiment that every one ought to have of his own imperfection and weakness! with the free and liberal manner in which God, by reason and Revelation, seeks to enlighten the human race, and to bring

bring them to the knowledge of the truth ! with the abundant kindness wherewith He, in whose hands are all authority and power, bears with his wandering creatures ! with the meek and affectionate spirit of Christianity and its beneficent and peaceable founder ! with the forbearing and indulgent behaviour of Christ and his Apostles towards the enemies of their doctrine, and towards every weak brother ! nay, with the very aim intended by such horrible measures !

It would lead me too far from the main scope of my present discourse, were I to set all these contradictions in their proper light. Thus much is certain, that this principle of reason and Christianity, namely, that all persecution on account of Religion and Faith is absurd and unlawful, was a principle of the Reformation also. Else the obstacles that were thrown in the way of the Reformers and their friends, the
menaces

menaces that were used to deter them from the prosecution of it, the penalties to which they were condemned, the wars that were carried on against them, the prisons, the scaffolds, the faggots that were made use of, were purely allowed means for preventing the spread and progress of what was denominated error, and for protecting what was called the truth, with its privileges and its respect. But have the Protestants at all times declared these compelling methods for keeping them in the communion of the predominant church, or for bringing them back to it again, to be unjust and cruel; then have they done so by means of the principle, That all persecution for religion and conscience-sake is irrational and unchristian. This principle therefore must we also uphold, think and act conformably to this principle, if we would rightfully bear the name of Protestant Christians. In this respect, it is not enough that we do not deprive those

who, according to our opinion, are under the influence of error, either of their lives or their goods; Protestant Christians will never so far forget themselves as that comes to. But the spirit of persecution does not exhibit itself by such manifest violences alone; it shews itself also then, when a man wounds him, whom he holds to be erroneous, in his honour, or disturbs him in his repose; when he affixes opprobrious epithets on him; when he gives glances of hatred or dislike towards him; when he scorns and derides him; when, as opportunities occur, he refuses him the regard, the support, the assistance, the comfort, which, as a man, as a Christian, as a member of civil society, he has a right to expect; when he curses him, and arbitrarily forbids him all hope of salvation. Whoever commits these faults, much more he who reckons them as duties, would probably be an open persecutor of his Fellow-christians, if his outward circumstances

stances were otherwise disposed. These faults we must therefore avoid, if we would be true to our principles. We must carefully separate the erring man from the error, which, according to our opinion, he cherishes, and shew him all the equity, all the affection, all the indulgence, which we may desire for ourselves. The rights of conscience must ever be sacred to us; we must readily allow others the same freedom and deference, the want or loss of which we ourselves should so sensibly feel. We must, lastly, endeavour to promote the knowledge of truth by no other means than such as are agreeable to the nature of rational creatures, who are able to improve their understandings, and to procure for their hearts a solid repose.

IV. A fourth principle of the Reformation was this: The Christian Religion consists not so much in outward usages and ceremonies, as in Christian dispositions of

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heart,

heart, and in such a conduct as is consistent with these dispositions. Christianity is calculated to be the Religion of all nations ; it is calculated to unite all nations together ; it accordingly prescribes its confessors but very few rites. It is adapted to render them reasonable votaries of God and CHRIST ; accordingly, these rites must be simple and easy of apprehension, and more addressed to the intellect than to the senses. The thoughts and inclinations of men were, by means of this sacred doctrine, to be drawn off by degrees from sensual and earthly things, in which they were wholly absorbed, and directed to invisible and heavenly objects. To this purpose was Christianity ordained ; and to this purpose was it perfectly suited in its original institution and frame. But of this design of Christianity mankind but too soon lost sight. Predominant sensuality asserted its ancient claims ; and the former Jewish and Pagan temper displayed itself even among the

the followers of CHRIST. The attachment to pure truth and unsophisticated virtue, and the taste for noble simplicity, was made to yield to the blandishments of a sensual, a ceremonial worship, and to corporeal rites; it was forced to give place to a taste for childish mummery and glittering pomp. Ceremonies were heaped upon ceremonies, festival added to festival, and solemnity to solemnity. Thus, by imperceptible degrees, Christianity came to be disguised so far as scarcely to be known. Thus was the attention of its professors drawn off from its essentials, and turned solely to the appendages and trappings of it. Thus, by little and little, it lost its sacred power to enlighten and improve mankind, and to give a solid serenity to their hearts. Thus, at the same time, was all possible encouragement given to the introduction of superstition and unbelief. These corruptions were grown to their full height and vigour in the time

immediately preceding the Reformation: The Christian Religion had, in a manner, taken its flight, and left nothing but an almost undistinguishable and no venerable likeness in its place. Will-worship, rites, ceremonies, pilgrimages, the founding and endowment of monasteries and churches, abstinence from certain meats, a variety of mortifications, and penances, were put instead of integrity and virtue, and taken as substitutes for them. This the Reformers acknowledged; this roused them to reflection, and to examination; this inspired them with the generous design of labouring at the general improvement of the church. It grieved them to see the deluded people wasting their time, their powers, their property, in things that could procure them no real advantage, no permanent comfort. They therefore manfully lifted up their voice against these egregious abuses and the prevailing superstition. They therefore hastened without delay, by discourses

discourses and writings, to apply a remedy to the disease. Therefore they so strenuously exclaimed, and with so much energy, against the necessity and merit of the good works of those times, that is, against monkery and monastic vows, against the voluntary penances, against the costly offerings which were made to the saints, their images, and their shrines, and against other such things, which were formerly honoured in an eminent manner with the name of good works, and were accounted as acts of real piety. Therefore, in short, they set themselves seriously to work, to diminish the multitude of ceremonial rites; entirely to abrogate such as were the most unbecoming and prejudicial; to fix on a better footing the proper value and the real design of such as were most useful or harmless; and by degrees to restore to Christianity its primitive form, which was so amiable; and, if they did not every where completely accomplish

their laudable design, we must ascribe that misfortune principally to the times and circumstances in which they lived. We, who live in happier times, and more favourable circumstances, are in bounden duty obliged to prosecute the edifice on the foundations our worthy progenitors laid; to combat every thing that may have been preserved among us, of the old superstition, with as much zeal, and no less prudence; and ever more and more to promote the purity and simplicity of the Christian worship. It is our bounden duty constantly to keep the essentials of Religion and Christianity before our eyes, and to give Christian integrity, the exercise of the Christian virtues, and the faithful discharge of our moral duties, the most decided preference beyond all ceremonies and rites whatever. If, therefore, we rest in externals; if we rely on our fellowship with the Christian Church, on our attendance on the public worship, on the keeping of festivals,

festivals, on receiving the holy communion, on fasting and praying, on giving of alms, and the like, and hold them as competent to our salvation, without striving at the regulation and improvement of our lives; in that case, we shall not only manifestly contradict not only the doctrines of Christianity, but also our Protestant principles; and deny that in fact which our forefathers, with so much pains, and at the hazard of their lives, declared and maintained.

V. The fifth principle of the Reformation, with which we conclude, is this: The diversity of opinions and usages, in matters that do not compose the essence of Religion, is no sufficient cause for separating from one another, and for relinquishing church-fellowship. Thus the Reformers and their first scholars thought, till the heat of controversy, and other unhappy circumstances, gave ascendancy to

to the contrary way of thinking. At the beginning they had nothing less in view than a separation from the Romish Church, or the erection of a separate society from it. They would readily have remained in its communion, if it could have been brought to abate somewhat of its too rigid authority, to correct its most glaring abuses, which itself must acknowledge for abuses, to require no blind obedience, and to allow more place to Christian freedom. On these reasonable conditions, they would have borne with patience many other hardships, have had indulgence for many inferior abuses and errors, and have endeavoured to preserve, with all other Christians, the unity of spirit in the bond of peace; and we may affirm with truth, that they did not so much leave the then prevailing Church of their own accord, as they were forcibly ejected from it. But does it not hence appear, that they did not hold the difference in opinion and usages in less essential

essential matters to be a sufficient cause of separation, and of breaking off church-communion with each other? How much the rather then should this obtain in regard to Protestant Churches, which in the main, and in the most important particulars of religion and worship, so nearly agree together; which, in the earliest times of the Reformation, were so intimately connected with each other; which so long laboured in common at the amelioration of the faith and the church, and so often suffered together in that glorious cause? Would this amelioration ever have been effected, if, at its commencement, they had so severely judged and censured each other as since at times has happened? To what scholar can it be unknown, that Luther and Melancthon, those two deserving men, were not entirely of the same opinion on every article that relates to religion and worship? nay, that in those very particulars which

afterwards occasioned the unhappy division
 of the Protestant Churches, a difference
 of sentiment plainly appeared between
 these two great and famous men? Did
 they therefore separate from each other?
 Did they constitute diverse Christian So-
 cieties? Did they stand by one another
 with less love and constancy in the ad-
 vancement of the common cause? And
 did not the same difference in opinion
 touching less essential matters arise, more
 or less, among the other Reformers and
 their fellow-labourers, without destroying
 the concord that subsisted between them?
 Nay, can it ever be expected, that a per-
 fect harmony, in the manner of conceiv-
 ing of every thing that relates to Religion,
 should be found among men who think
 for themselves, and whose capacities are
 so various? How lamentable then is it,
 that we have so far departed from the pri-
 mitive temper of the Reformers! and have
 separated on account of such things as,
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in the opinion of the most enlightened and worthiest men in the two Protestant Churches, do not relate to the essentials of Religion, and neither militate against the pious conduct, nor with the repose and comfort, of the Christian, and in regard to which we are actually come much nearer together ! May it then please the Great Parent of Mankind completely to remove the wall of separation between two so closely related, between two sister-churches, and to inspire all the members of both with fraternal sentiments towards each other ! None of us, I am persuaded, would neglect any opportunity for promoting, as much as possible, this salutary work. Let us continue to manifest, by all our words and actions, that we confess each other for brethren, and as such sincerely esteem and love them ; that we are still as much in union with them as if there were no difference in our ecclesiastical regimen. This will do honour to the Christian doc-

trine which we all profess, and to the Protestant principles we in common maintain. This will be well-pleasing to God and to our SAVIOUR. This will make us ever fitter for being admitted into that blessed heavenly society, where all the sincere worshipers of God, of all nations and times, will unite together, and be blessed in the enjoyment of everlasting peace.

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THE
MOST MEMORABLE
CIRCUMSTANCES
OF THE
REFORMATION;
AND THE
DUTIES INCUMBENT UPON US THEREFROM.

O come hither, and behold the Works of God;
how wonderful he is in his doing toward the
children of men !

PSALM lxvi. 4.

THE
MOST MEMORABLE
CIRCUMSTANCES
OF THE
REFORMATION

AND THE
PROMINENT PART OF THE REFORMATION

O come hither, and view the Works of God;
how wonderful he is in his doing toward the
children of men!

Psalm lxxvi. 4.

THE
 MOST MEMORABLE
 CIRCUMSTANCES
 OF THE
 REFORMATION;
 AND THE
 DUTIES INCUMBENT UPON US THEREFROM.

THE words of the Psalmist we have just now read, animate us to a duty which is no less profitable than becoming. What is more becoming us, as rational creatures, than that we should as sedulously attend to the operations of Providence in

the course of nature, as well as in the methods of grace? that we should endeavour, as far as the measure of our understanding will allow, to penetrate into the views and relations of it, and to admire with the profoundest reverence the justice, the wisdom, and goodness, that thence proceed in copious emanations? But what likewise can be more profitable to us than this noble employment? How much it is adapted to elevate our ideas of the perfection of God, and his government, to strengthen our confidence in the Almighty, to calm and compose us in all, even the most trying events, and to excite us to the most sacred gratitude for the loving-kindnesses of the Lord! To-day I mean to call your attention in particular to a public reason for this duty, by directing your minds to a transaction, which must be classed among the most remarkable that ever occurred in the Christian Church. It is the happy improvement in matters of Faith

Faith that was brought about by the services of Luther and his fellow-labourers throughout a considerable part of Europe. The first springs that led to this important transaction; the way and manner wherein it took effect; the great and beneficial alterations it gave birth to; all render it completely worthy of our notice and attention. We find, on all hands, evident traces of the wisdom and goodness of God, and the strongest motives to extol his name, to thank him for his benefits, and to incite ourselves to a proper and becoming application of them. Come hither then, and behold the works of God; how wonderful he is in his doing towards the children of men! To this end let us,

First, consider the most memorable circumstances in this improvement in matters of Faith; and

Then examine the duties to which it binds us.

Long had the Western Church sighed under the rigid and almost insupportable sway of the bishop of Rome, sometimes giving vent to her complaint of the loss of her noblest liberties, and sometimes mourning over it in secret. Frequently already had she made some generous efforts to cast off this heavy and degrading yoke, or at least to alleviate it by some due limitation of the Papal power. Already at various times had witnesses to the truth stood forth, who attracted no small attention, and shone as lights in the midst of that tenfold night of darkness. The ignorance and corruption of manners, that prevailed among the people of CHRIST, were too general, and the dismal consequences of them were too apparent, to allow the sincere and well-disposed, that yet were found among them, to remain any longer silent: scarcely was there one, except a majority of the clergy, who did not wish for the removal of them. Whole synods were forced to join in these desires,

desires, and to confess the necessity of a general reform. But the most ardent desires had been hitherto fruitless; the best endeavours had been exerted in vain; one while frustrated by artifice, at another defeated by force, all hopes of amendment were now nearly extinct. This fed the pride and the ambition of the Roman Pontiffs; it inspired them with an overweening confidence in their authority and their might; it induced them to defy all the rules of moderation and decorum, and to shew themselves in their real form; and this very thing it was that occasioned their fall, and became the proximate cause of the happy Reformation. You know how Tetzel, the notorious dealer in indulgences, under the orders of Leo the Tenth, sold the forgiveness of sins for money, and under the cloak of religion carried on the greatest impostures. You know with what daring effrontery this senseless traffick was pursued; and, notwithstanding its absurdity,

how it was countenanced and supported by the bishop of Rome. This roused Luther to oppose these shameful abuses, and openly to stand forth in the cause of Religion and truth. This weakened the superstitious reverence in which the Papal authority had been hitherto held. This gave rise to salutary doubts, and a longing for better instruction, even among the common people. It excited in high and low, in both the learned and the unlearned, a vehement hunger after the word of life, after purer and sounder food for the immortal soul. It encouraged all men to inquiry; and they now began to try that which they had till now implicitly believed. The discovery of one error led on to the detection of another: one truth paved the way to another. The light continually kept spreading farther and wider, and in a very short time reached and covered this favoured isle.—How small the causes of this important change, when
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abstractedly considered! Who would have thought that those pious frauds would have been attended by such striking effects, that they were to prove so advantageous to truth! Who could have supposed, that the very thing, which was contrived to rivet the fetters of superstition and bondage, should turn out to the advancement of knowledge, of the freedom and happiness of mankind! Let us here confess and admire the wisdom of God. He alone knows how to bring light out of darkness, and to make even wickedness contribute to promote the purposes of his wise administration.

The same thing appears too in the manner wherein the Reformation was effected. It had a great resemblance with the manner in which the Christian doctrine was first divulged and disseminated among mankind. I shall not pretend to compare these two events together in every particular. Cir-

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cumstances did not require that they should be exactly alike. The truth of the Christian Religion, and the divine authenticity of the sacred books, were now sufficiently confirmed; their authority stood in need of no new and extraordinary demonstration. But as an attentive spectator of the revolutions that happen in the world discovers traces on all sides of the divine government and Providence; so may we here plainly perceive the hand of the Most High, and his wisdom making use of nearly the same means in the republication of almost forgotten truth, as it formerly had employed in the revelation of it. Did he formerly, according to the expression of the Apostle Paul, call not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble? Did he chuse the weak and despicable in the eyes of men, as his instruments in the promulgation and extension of the Gospel? The same thing happened likewise here. The bishops, whose authority

thority was as great as it was unmerited and ill-founded, had totally lost sight of the design and duties of their office. They had addicted themselves to the most criminal ambition, the most extravagant voluptuousness, and the most flagitious vices; and were utterly unconcerned about the knowledge, the comfort, and the everlasting salvation of the souls committed to their charge. The great men of the world were kept in the grossest ignorance by their blind guides; and the generality of the learned were either occupied merely in such studies as had not the least relation to religion, or they were too timid and too self-interested to impart their better perceptions to others, and expose themselves to the danger to which such communications led. Accordingly, they were not persons, whose stations, whose offices, whose rank, or the fame of an extraordinary learning, distinguished from others, that first stood forth against error, and asserted the rights
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of truth. No! They were persons uncelebrated and almost unknown, who had little to say in the world, who at first were despised by their opponents, and were scarcely accounted worthy of regard; persons indeed of no inconsiderable talents, and of still greater honesty and courage; but who, for the most part, had not the qualifications either of a captivating eloquence, or a peculiar politeness of carriage, or an extensive knowledge of the world, so necessary for winning affection, or obtaining access to the ears and minds of men. Such persons were they, who, under the Divine assistance, made head against the kingdom of superstition and darkness, who made its bulwarks tremble, and freed a great part of the inhabitants of Europe from its usurped dominion. And what were the means they made use of to this end? Had they might and authority in their hands? Did they endeavour to acquire approbation and obedience by threatenings

enings or by violence? Did they gain over dependents and friends by alluring promises, or by temporal rewards? Nothing less than all this. They were also in these respects the true followers of the first preachers of the Evangelical doctrine. Their weapons were not carnal, but spiritual. They did not require to be believed on their bare word. They submitted all their opinions and dogmas to the severest scrutiny. They made their appeal to the Holy Scriptures, and to them alone, for their final sentence. They were at all times ready to give an account of their faith; and they did it on all occasions with a chearfulness and a constancy that did honour to their moral character, and put their enemies to utter confusion. The difference that men saw between their conduct and that of their opponents was highly advantageous to them. They contended with arguments; these with big words and calumnies. They asked for fair and open discussions of Religion

ligion and worship ; these required a blind and unlimited submission to human authority. They produced demonstrations ; these menaced with excommunications, with proscriptions, with fire and sword. Not they, but these were principal authors of the troubles, the confusion, the bloody wars, which afterwards arose from these disputes. If the Protestants at length had recourse to arms ; they did it from compulsion ; they did it for the most part as free people, with the consent, and under the conduct, of their princes ; they did it for the maintenance of their civil as well as their religious liberties, and had therein no view to the extension of their doctrine. The methods, by which the Reformation was effected, were therefore, as far as human infirmity and circumstances allowed, consistent with the spirit of the Gospel. They were extremely remarkable, and so constituted, that they plainly testified of a peculiar Divine assistance.

We

We shall perceive this the better, if we cast an eye on the various and beneficial revolutions that were brought about by this great event. The authority of the bishops of Rome was weakened; and their tyrannical sway, under which all Europe sighed, was circumscribed. The liberties of nations, the rights of kings and princes, were asserted with energy, and vindicated from the attacks of the superior clergy. Learning threw off the shackles that hindered her progress; most of the sciences assumed quite another, and a much worthier, form than they formerly had. The cloud of superstition and ignorance, under which Christianity was hid, was in several regions happily dispelled, and made to vanish by the torch of truth. The sacred books, which hardly any either resorted to or knew, were now laid open to all; and every man was enabled to draw both knowledge and comfort from those abundant sources of wisdom and life. The human traditions,

traditions, the errors, the idolatrous rites, the absurd and ridiculous ceremonies that had sily crept into the Christian Church, were greatly diminished, and gave more place to the infallible oracles of Divine Revelation, the saving doctrines of the Gospel, and to a much purer and more rational worship. The common people were freed from the intolerable burdens imposed on them by the tyranny and rapacity of their guides; they got plain and sound instruction in Religion, and were shewn the way to happiness. The monkish orders, which all men complained of, and yielded not the smallest advantage, were abolished; and their revenues employed more conformably to the views of their founders, to the support of universities and schools. The excesses and vices, that were practised under the mask of devotion and piety, were detected and disgraced; the morals of all ranks were improved; and, while truth was thus acquiring votaries,
virtue

virtue was increasing the number of her friends. What happy revolutions! Who can contemplate them without emotion, admiration, and sensible joy! Who does not feel himself constrained to confess, that they are no less great and remarkable in themselves, than desirable and beneficial in their effects! Here then we may justly exclaim: "O come hither, and behold the works of God; how wonderful he is in his doing toward the children of men!"

Here, however, we are not to break off. The transaction we are speaking of lays us under still greater and more important obligations; it calls us to weightier duties. And what are these duties?

The first is this: We must, as in all events, so also in this, not stop short at second causes, but lift our eyes and thoughts to the first Great Cause of all things. In the sentiment of our own unworthiness,

we must say with the Psalmist, "Not unto us; not unto us, O Lord! but unto thy name, be the praise." It was God who awakened those men, who gave them the light, the boldness, and the fortitude, that were requisite for undertaking and prosecuting this glorious work. It was God who blessed their labours and their endeavours, who defeated the corrupt designs of their foes, who powerfully took up the cause of despised and oppressed Truth, who defended her advocates against the might of error, so far surpassing theirs, and preserved them from the ruin that seemed clearly inevitable. It is God to whom we are indebted for the invaluable liberties and prerogatives that accrued to us from the Reformation, and which we still possess, preserved by his grace and mercy from all the attacks of artifice and violence. Him therefore we must adore, as the author and preserver of our happiness. To him must we chiefly look, and admire the wisdom

wisdom and goodness of his ways. Him must we praise with grateful hearts, that he has also in this sense redeemed us from the power of darkness, and placed us in the kingdom of light. Him must we likewise more confidently trust for the future, nothing doubting but that he will maintain us in these noble privileges, unless we render ourselves absolutely unworthy of them, to the end of time.

Another duty it enjoins us is this: That we carefully preserve, and think and act agreeably to, the principles on which the legitimacy of this improvement in matters of belief is built. No man, no body of men, is infallible; no man, no body of men, is authorised to assume the sovereignty over the faith and the consciences of their fellow-beings, or to compel them, by violent means, to a compliance with particular doctrines, whether true or false: every individual, without distinction of

rank, of mode of life or sex, is not only justified in examining the Religion wherein he was born and educated, but is in duty bound to prove it by the rules of sound Reason and Divine Revelation; in these researches, to set aside all human regards, and barely to follow his own convictions: the liberty of serving God according to his own perceptions, and of living consistently with his knowledge, can never be refused to any man without the greatest injustice, since every man must give an account of himself to the Ruler and Judge of the world; and all tyranny over conscience is no less absurd in itself, than shocking and criminal in the sight of God. These, these are the principles on which the validity of the Reformation rests, and together with which it must either stand or fall. Are these principles false; then was the improvement in matters of faith, that was made in the times we speak of, a desperate and unjust undertaking, that not only

merits no applause, but is rightly entitled to reproach and contempt. But are they true, as none among us, I think, will deny; are they grounded in the nature both of God and man: then must they still be valid; then must they ever be venerable to us, and the standard of our judgments, and the rule of our conduct. We should, consequently, act against our own principles, were we to require from any a blind obedience, or an unconditional submission, in religious matters; were we to condemn such as differ from us in this or the other particular, hate them on that account, or deal hardly with them in any respect. Would we maintain our privileges, would we not render ourselves unworthy of them; then must we here likewise act towards every man as we wish they would act by us; we must grant to others the liberties we ourselves possess, and find so valuable and precious to us. Love and forbearance

must be the distinguishing characteristics of our church, and the unchangeable rule of all our thoughts and actions.

These observations conduct us naturally to a third duty, which is this: Whatever reverence is due to those great men, to whom, under God, we are indebted for freedom of conscience, and an improved Doctrine; yet must not this reverence be superstitious, or excessive; and the discoveries they have made in the realms of truth ought not to be detrimental to the pains we take in the same design. Truth is an universal good, to the possession whereof every man may attain, and from which none are excluded but such as exclude themselves. But, it is at the same time a good which contains in it so many treasures, that no man can dare to pretend he possesses it wholly. Luther, Zuinglius, Melancthon, Calvin, are names which no friend of truth, no well-wisher to the freedom

freedom and happiness of mortals, can mention without respect, and whose memory will always be blessed; names that, in the short catalogue of benefactors to the human race, are placed in the foremost lines; but withal are only names of men, who were neither infallible nor perfectly holy, who were subject to the same infirmities and failings as we; nay, who had far more obstacles, and much fewer helps, than we have at present, in the study of truth. We should depreciate their merits, wound their modesty, and act contrary to their generous views, were we blindly to give into their determinations, or, from a criminal laziness, peremptorily acquiesce in what they have done. The times and circumstances wherein they lived, nay, the very nature of things, would not allow them so quickly to bring to perfection the improvement they had taken in hand. He, who has passed many years in a dungeon of total darkness, must find it difficult, if not

impossible, to endure at once the brightness of the noon-day sun. They have vanquished the general and the greatest difficulties; they have opened the path; under the divine assistance they have executed more than, humanly speaking, we could have expected of them. We are now, with alacrity and perseverance, to pursue the way they have shewn us, and on which they have gone before us, and always to endeavour more and more to extend the boundaries of the empire of truth. We must follow the light which Providence by them has set up, and endeavour, by means of it, ever to prosecute and to finish the work, which they did no more than commence. We must strive to render our ideas of God and his service constantly more plain and adequate. We must see with our own eyes, and be sure of our Faith on solid reasons. Collected meditation, a diligent and impartial examination of the Sacred Records, for the free access
to

to which we are indebted to that Revolution, must be our most pleasant employment. By this infallible rule we must prove all things; from this pure source we must daily draw wisdom and knowledge.

But we are not to content ourselves even with this. The Reformation of Faith had in view the Reformation of Life: without this, the former is of no value: without this it will be more prejudicial than useful to us; it will render our account more heavy, and our condemnation greater. What will it profit us to know the contents of the Sacred Volumes, and to be in possession of a safer rule of behaviour, if we do not make use of it; if, instead of following the precepts of the Gospel, we only pursue our perverted desires, if we are no better than those who still live in the darkness of ignorance and superstition? What will it avail us, to know the way that leads to God, and to fellowship with
S 4 him,

him, if we do not walk that way, and persevere in it even to the end? What advantage will it bring us, to be freed from the dominion of error, if we remain under the harder and more dangerous tyranny of vice, if we continue the servants of sin and of death? Let no man imagine, that the mere knowledge of truth, or a dead belief, that is not fruitful in good works, will render him blessed. Let no man rely on the outward prerogatives he owes to his birth or education. All these, at the day of judgment, will not serve him in any stead. The questions then will not so much turn upon what doctrines we professed, or what ecclesiastical society we were of; as, whether we faithfully and readily followed the light that enlightened us? whether we acted according to our knowledge? whether we worthily employed the advantages God had given us in preference to so many other nations of the earth? These will be the questions; the
answers

answers to which will determine our future lot. Would we, then, be able to stand out this trial, and not be put to confusion before God and man; then we must cast off the works of darkness, as children of the light, and honestly pursue our course. Our conduct must harmonise with the confessions of our lips. Our virtue must demonstrate the rectitude of our faith. We must seek after "holiness, without which no man can see the Lord." So shall we render our Religion respectable and amiable even in the eyes of its enemies. So shall we experience, that it is the power of God, to render happy all such as believe therein. So shall we, at the same time, have the well-founded hope, that God will constantly preserve to us the possession of the spiritual advantages he has granted us, and that he will cause them to descend to our latest posterity. May he do so, in the abundance of his clemency and truth! Amen.

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I speak as to wise men. Judge ye what I say.
1 Corinth. x. 15.

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FROM the words of the Apostle Paul, which I have just pronounced, you will readily suppose, that my present discourse is not so much designed for beginners in the knowledge of religious doctrines, as for such as are farther advanced in that knowledge ; who have learnt to think for themselves on these doctrines, and are able to prosecute the hints that may be given them to farther reflexions.

And

And to this end my present discourse is actually adapted. It is meant to lead us to make enquiries of our own, and to assist in elucidating and rectifying divers ideas; which, as they are conceived and adopted by the generality of persons, are by no means plainly and accurately stated.

Already, at various times, I have discoursed to you on the subject of the Reformation. What I have still to say on it, I shall now deliver. It was an undertaking no less necessary than laudable, and which even its most zealous opponents do not venture absolutely to disapprove, — an event which has had, and still has, the most important influence on the way of thinking, on the morals, the knowledges and sciences, the political and civil constitution, the virtue and the welfare, of the successive centuries; — an event, the consequences whereof have, on the whole, been extraordinarily wholesome and good, and have
diffused

diffused much light, life, liberty, comfort, and happiness, among mankind. Certainly each impartial friend to truth and man will and must bless the memory of the Reformers; confess them for noble, liberal persons, worthy patriots, and great benefactors to their brethren, let him belong to what church he may, and however wide he may differ from them in opinions and customs.

Numerous, however, as the reasons may be for us to rejoice in this event, and to bless the memory of its authors and promoters; yet we are not to ascribe to them any merits which they had not, and in some measure could not have; and by how much the more real and actual advantages we are indebted to them for, so much the less are we to attribute to them such as they have not procured us, and probably were not able to procure. And this is what we now intend somewhat more circumstantially

cumstantially to discriminate. We will endeavour to form

Just ideas of the advantages of the Reformation.

To this end, we will shew you,

First, wherein these advantages do not consist; or what the Reformers did not perform, and in some measure could not do.

And, then, wherein the advantages of their Reformation actually do consist, and what they actually have performed.

When I speak of what the Reformers have, or have not performed, I speak not of one, but of all the Protestant Churches; I speak, without distinction, of Luther and of Zuinglius, of Melanchthon and of Calvin, of the Swiss and of the Saxon, of the English and of the Scottish Reformers.

All

All of them performed much; all of them have procured many and signal advantages to their brethren: but none have performed all, and neither were they able to do all. They were men; limited, fallible men, who could not inspect all things, could not free themselves at once from all prejudices, nor enucleate every thing which even they themselves accounted to be good and useful. They lived in particular times, in particular circumstances; each of them had previously had his peculiar education, his instruction, his tutors; all this gave a certain settled bent to the development of their intellect, and placed certain boundaries to it. They came from darkness into light, from bondage into liberty. No wonder if at times they were dazzled by the brightness of the light, or if they did not always make the best use of the liberty they were unused to. We should affront, more than honour them, by ascribing to them prerogatives, per-

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ceptions, and merits, which they did not possess, which they could not possess, and which they never ascribed to themselves. Never did they boast of infallibility, or of not being liable to imposition. Never did they pretend to have entirely completed the work of reformation, or to have done all that could be done for the improvement of worship and religious instruction. But their hopes that their descendants would tread in their footsteps, and supply their defects, they often declared like noble-minded men.

The benefits therefore for which we are indebted to them do not consist in their having left to us a complete summary of all that relates to Religion, perfectly pure, and free from every false and indeterminate notion; and so discharged us from all scrutinies of our own, and disqualified us for all fresh investigations, by having brought us to the extreme verge of human knowledge

knowledge concerning heavenly things. As little as this is absolutely to be expected of any men, so little were they capable of doing so by the circumstances in which they were placed. Their researches into the received axioms of the Church, their opposition to the prevailing errors, happened only eventually, not from previously concerted plans, not from the design of examining anew, and rectifying the whole religious system. The monstrous abuse which then was carried on by the sale of indulgencies, as they were called, was, as you know, the proximate cause of the Reformation, the first error which the Reformers, and particularly Luther, openly attacked; and this was, as it were, the point of view from whence they considered the other doctrines of the Church, and proceeded to the confutation of the other errors, which stood in a closer or remoter connexion with them. But the path which time and conjunctures had opened to them

did not lead them to the free investigation of all; or of all the important doctrines of Religion: and the obstacles they met with on this path did not always allow them to consider, on all their various sides, and precisely to state, even those doctrines which could not escape their attention, and which they did examine afresh. This will be rendered apparent, by a few short remarks.

First remark. Many, in some measure, important dogmas of Religion and Christianity, came into no particular consideration at that time; were not looked upon as doctrines which might probably be more perspicuously, or more justly, represented than had hitherto been done, and were therefore not made to undergo any fresh discussion; because no particular occasion offered thereto; or because these doctrines had, for a long series of time, been reputed as quite incomprehensible mysteries, from whence a sacred gloom had spread

spread itself around them, which men were afraid to penetrate ; or because they did not appear to have any very great and immediate influence on the happiness and moral conduct of mankind ; or, in short, because there was so much to do about other matters, and the attention could not at once be directed to all things. Among these were the Doctrine of God and his Attributes ; the Doctrine of the Son and the Spirit of God, and their relation to the Father ; the doctrine of the work that Jesus had to do on earth, and of the ends and effects thereof ; the doctrine of good and bad angels, and their influence on the actions and fortunes of the human race ; the doctrine of the nature, the destination and powers of men, &c. All these, and many other doctrines, fell under no new investigation, at least in the first periods of the Reformation, and before the first settlement of the doctrinal constitutions of the Protestant Churches ; but were adopted as

they had been settled and delivered by the fathers of the fourth and the following centuries.

Second remark. Various other dogmas, from the heat of the controversies that arose about them, were not then stated with sufficient precision. For the sake of removing farther from error, they exposed themselves to the danger of keeping remote from the truth, the abuse whereof had engendered that error. For more surely avoiding one by-way, they struck directly into its opposite by-way, and so missed of the strait and proper path that lay between them. This was the case, for example, with the doctrine of Faith and good works, and their influence on the grace and happiness of mankind. They did not precisely enough define the meaning of these terms; they sometimes implied more, sometimes fewer, and sometimes very different things. While one sort made Faith to signify

nify a hearty acceptation of the whole Christian Doctrine, as the rule of their lives; others were for confining it to a cold, unfruitful assent to the History of JESUS, or to an unconditional trust in his merits. While one, by good-works, understood voluntary penances, superstitious rites of worship, and practices of mere ceremony; others reckoned among them the works of Godliness and Virtue. If one exalted Faith at the expence of good-works; another recommended good-works to the degradation of Faith; and thus the controversy was, not unfrequently, more about words than things, and went farther asunder, in many respects, than they had any cause to do.

Third remark. Many other dogmas and abuses were, at that time, left unexamined and uncontroverted, or only altered and limited in some few respects and particulars, for fear of giving too much alarm

to numbers that were weak, but well disposed, and because they could not hope thoroughly to discuss the whole truth. To this class belong the doctrine of confession and absolution; of the design and efficacy of the Sacraments: to this class belong numbers of rites and ceremonies, which, if not superstitious, are yet liable to too great abuses in the public worship. It was to be feared lest the good cause might be injured, and the populace led into mistake, if they were at once deprived of those things which had been, till now, the objects of their veneration, arguments to their repose, and incentives to their devotion.—At the same time, they thus endeavoured to make their departure from the former doctrines, and the institutions of Church-worship, the less conspicuous or striking, and to deprive their opponents of all pretext of charging them with the froward determination absolutely

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to divide and separate from them in all respects.

Fourth remark. At times human infirmities and passions, the spirit of discord and party, interfered in the discussions of religious doctrines. Men prematurely pronounced decisively upon them; too soon espoused a certain party; declared themselves too suddenly and too loud against all other ways of thinking. Self-love and false shame now mingled in the dispute. The disputants contested long; they contested too often with vehemence; they sometimes, probably without perceiving it themselves, contested more for their own authority than for the truth; and at length, merely for putting an end to the contest, or from political and private views, the farther examination of these Doctrines was put off, and were pronounced good, and consecrated, as if they had been thoroughly examined, and established by the Reformers

formers. Thus it fared in particular with the doctrine of the Holy Communion. It was taken for settled, before it had been sufficiently investigated by free examination; it was maintained in the acceptation that had once been affixed to it with too much positiveness and heat, to admit of the easy alterations it required; and afterwards, when the purer rays of truth had set it in a clearer light, had spread themselves farther, and had found a pretty general concurrence, probably that of Luther himself, certainly of Melancthon and his scholars, yet all access to it among the people at large was debarred by the doctrinal statements which had now long been made, and were already hallowed, and the farther spread of juster notions concerning it was prevented by political allegations.

Fifth and last remark. Amidst all these hindrances and untoward circumstances, most of the means, for rectifying and adjusting

justing the received doctrinal tenets, were, at the time of the Reformation, neither so common, nor so serviceable, as they are at present. How shallow and unintelligible was the then prevailing scholastic philosophy! How ill-adapted to awaken and promote any liberal reflexions, and to sanction the rights of the human intellect! And, therefore, how much less connexion had this philosophy with the received religious notions!—How imposing was the authority of the fathers, and the pretended general councils!—How insecure were the decisions of authentic writings, and the monuments of antiquity!—How imperfect the knowledge of exposition of Scripture!—How rare the calm, sedate, unbiaſſed temper, which is indispensable to the successful investigation of truth!

On taking all these remarks together, we shall find them produce these two results ;

It

It will follow, that, considering all these circumstances of the Reformers, even allowing them the best intentions, and the most ardent endeavours, we are not to expect, and cannot expect, that they absolutely removed all that was erroneous and reprehensible from the dogmas and the solemn rites of Christians; or that they delivered to us a totally pure, complete, and unimproveable instruction, exactly defined and settled in all respects, of every thing that relates to Religion and Worship; and that therefore this cannot be the advantage for which we are peculiarly indebted to their generous and laudable endeavours.

But it will likewise follow, that with all the esteem we bestow on them, and which they so justly deserve at our hands, we are not to hold them for infallible, and unsusceptible of imposition; that we are by no means to stop short where they broke off;

off; that we must much rather make advances on the way they opened to us, and do our utmost to bring nearer to its perfection the work which they have begun. This most assuredly would Luther, and Zuinglius, and many other of the Reformers, do, if they had their course once more to pursue in the present times! This they have actually commissioned their posterity to do; and we cannot more worthily honour their memories, than by treading in their steps, and promoting their aims. This is what no man will deny who forms just conceptions of the really great advantages we are indebted to them for, and knows how to estimate their intrinsic value.

And what are now these advantages? Wherein do they properly consist?

The first advantage for which we are indebted to the Reformation, is a considerable diminution of the superstition which

which formerly prevailed in the whole Christian Church, and which even still prevails in by far too great a part of it. I say diminution, and not abolition, not eradication, of superstition. For even we, Protestants, are not free from all superstition; even among us, powers and efficacies are still attributed to many things, which they have not, and cannot have. But what a glorious advantage is even this diminution and limitation of superstition! How severely did the yoke of it press upon our fathers! Transport yourselves in imagination to the times anterior to the Reformation; turn over the histories of hundreds, nay, of thousands of years that went before; or, if you cannot do this, then visit the Christian realms or regions, where light and liberty do not yet in the least prevail, and compare their condition with ours.

Only, for example, reflect upon the
worship

worship of God in spirit and in truth, almost totally suppressed by the adoration of such a number of saints. Think on the painful, the expensive visits to their celebrated temples and images; on the reverence in which the pretended relics, the bones and tatters of martyrs, or of other holy departed persons, were held, and on the miraculous powers attributed to them; on the heavy fasts; on the cruel mortifications and penances; on the gloomy, misanthropical life of the monks and nuns, to which the supreme degree of holiness was ascribed; on the slavish dread of evil spirits, and the arts of forcery; on the ridiculous preservatives from their influence and their power; on the various kinds of conjuration and benediction; on the enormous catalogue of feast-days and holidays, which men were compelled to observe, to the prejudice of their business and affairs, and to the manifest detriment of the civil welfare; on the foreign and unintelligible

language in which the most awful part of worship was performed: do but think, I say, on all this, and consider that we are in a great measure free from all these and still more superstitious opinions, rites, and practices, which are an affront to the human, the Christian character, and that it is merely our own fault if we do not entirely dismiss whatever yet remains of the old superstition among us; and you will certainly, not without a real sensible joy, acknowledge how much we are indebted to the Reformation in all these respects.

Another no less important advantage of the Reformation, is the weakening of human regards in religious concerns, and the limitation of the surreptitious and formerly so much abused authority, not only of the superior, but also of the lower clergy. How extensive formerly was the authority of bishops in general, and of the bishop of Rome in particular! And how much

much did they abuse it, to the gratifying of their passions, to the prosecution of worldly and political projects and designs, to the violation of the most sacred rights of humanity and conscience; in short, to purposes for which it could not possibly have been given them! How oft was the pastoral staff, which should have tended the people, and led them beside the "waters of comfort," turned into a rod of iron, to rule them like slaves! How extravagant, how degrading to the men who were called Laics, was the idea which then obtained of whatever in any way related to the persons, the prerogatives, the institutions, of the priesthood! How severely was every trespass against it punished, though often involuntary, often insignificant, and often arising from a generous zeal for liberty and truth! Who, without shuddering, can barely think of that most terrible of all human tribunals, the Inquisition! Does any authority, however, which is unlawful,

and which is abused, seem grievous to men with whom any sentiment of freedom remains; then must that be the most intolerable which takes upon it to controul their consciences, their faith, their sentiments, and perceptions. And this authority, under the yoke whereof the Christians so long groaned, is limited by the Reformation. From this authority has it entirely delivered us, and many other Protestant Communion. — We honour the teachers of Religion and Christianity; we set a high value on the pains they employ in our instruction, to improve us, and render us happy; but we need not blindly believe, not blindly follow, even the worthiest among them; we need not hold them for men without human infirmities and failings, not for inimitable patterns of wisdom and sanctity. And how great also is this advantage! What more exalts the mind, what more enlarges the heart of a man, than the consciousness that he is no slave, that

that he is a free being, and that the way to the knowledge of truth, and to the highest human perfection, stands open to him as well as to his brethren !

A third advantage for which we are indebted to the Reformation, is the free, unmolested use of the Holy Scriptures. Ignorance and superstition had shut up this source of knowledge and comfort from the people at large, and from most of their teachers ; and an obscure sophistical philosophy prevented even the learned from drawing correcter perceptions from it. Only a very few could slake their thirst after truth and repose from the source itself ; the rest must content themselves with taking from muddy channels an unpleasant and unwholesome draught. The Bible was the least known of all books, the least esteemed, the least used ! Disgraceful as these truths are to those times, so certain and undeniable are they.

And here the merit of the Reformers shines in the most resplendent lustre. To draw the Holy Scriptures from obscurity, to translate them into the vernacular tongues, to put them into the hands of the people, to facilitate the use of them in various ways, was their first and principal concern; and in this respect they performed what their times and circumstances would allow. To them, therefore, are we chiefly indebted for our understanding of these pure and abundant sources of the knowledge of God and Religion, for the free use of them, for the light, and comfort, and power in goodness, we daily acquire from them, and that we can do all this in calm security and confidence. What an advantage! How many others does it comprise! To how many others has it prepared the way! And how dearly then must we esteem the memory of the Reformers, if we had nothing more to thank them for than the free and easy use of the Bible!

In fine, we owe to the Reformation the greater liberty of inquiry, the settled and acknowledged right of private judgment in religious matters. We are free; it is our duty to see with our own eyes, to judge from our own perceptions, to follow our own conviction; and this, incredible as it may appear, our ancestors dared not do! Indeed, this liberty, which displayed itself in its full vigour during the first periods of the Reformation, was afterwards, by the too great value that was set upon symbolical books and confessions of Faith, and by false notions of the unity of the church, which does not consist in a sameness of opinions, but in sameness of temper again circumscribed. However, this noble liberty is still perfectly adequate to the principles and the spirit of the Reformation; it is far greater and more universal in Protestant countries, than in those which are not so. It is there the safeguard of divine and human rights; men

may make use of it boldly and in open day ; it maintains its own authority ; it ever operates, and is ever enlarging its sphere ; and all this, but for the Reformation, either would not have happened at all, or not till after a great and tedious length of time.

And now rejoice in all these advantages, which you enjoy as Protestant Christians : confess their value ; it is great and various ; they relate to matters which are of the utmost consequence to men and Christians.

Thank God for these advantages. They are not fallen to your lot without his interposition ; he it is that has brought light out of darkness, made error give way to Truth, and slavery to freedom.

But use these advantages as their value and their views require. Pursue the way
to

to greater perfection and happiness, which has been prepared and cleared before you. Think now for yourselves on the doctrines of Religion, since you have liberty and ability thereto. Peruse the Holy Scriptures, since you have them in your hands; and peruse them with diligence, with attention, with an unbiassed and inquisitive mind, as these alone can make that reading truly useful. Examine after the truth with constant application; and prove whatever you are told by your teachers, since you have liberty to do so, and are encouraged to it by your teachers themselves. Therefore strive to make continual advances in knowledge, and to become continually more sure of your Faith. Demonstrate by your actions that you duly prize the light that enlightens you, and worthily employ the advantages you possess.

But, at the same time, take heed that you do not despise or condemn any to
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whom these advantages are denied. No; they are your brethren, your Fellow-Christians. Love them and honour them as such. To them also the way of bliss is open; they too may walk therein, and reach the prize. But, doubtless, it is not so easy for them to avoid the stumbling in it, as it is for you; it is darker to them, it is beset with many impediments and difficulties, even with many dangers, which you know nothing of, or may easily avoid. Pity, rather than condemn them; hold out to them, whenever you have an opportunity, an affectionate arm, instead of casting them from you; and forget not, that they, who conscientiously follow a feeble light, and adhere firm to their duty, are far better and happier than they who miss their way, in the most brilliant light, and who indeed know much, but do not practise what they know.

Labour at the improvement of your dispositions

positions and your conduct, no less, and even more, than the adjustment of your perceptions; and strive to excell those in virtue and piety, in philanthropy and beneficence, whom you excell in knowledge. He that best fulfills his duty, as far as he knows it; he that most faithfully follows his conscience, and readily does as much good as he can in his station and calling; he is the best Christian, be he otherwise distinguished by what name he will, and though he belong to this or any other community. He certainly belongs to the community of the just and good, that are at present dispersed among all the nations of the earth; and who will be collected hereafter, under JESUS, their leader and head, and eternally enjoy with him the reward of their integrity. O may this reward be the portion of us all! Amen.

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THE
BLESSEDNESS
OF
BENEFICENCE.

It is more blessed to give than to receive.
Acts xx. 35.

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and **BLESSEDNESS**

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THERE are times and circumstances,
when we, your ministers, ascend this
chair with heavy hearts, as we can indulge
but little hope that the word of Truth will
be announced with desirable success, and
that we shall reap much fruit from our la-
bour. This happens whenever our office,
and a zeal for your real welfare, require us

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to hold up your sins and failings before you, and of them such particularly as are the most rife amongst us, which are the least accounted in the world for such, and in behalf whereof self-love, pride, custom, and fashion, usually produce the most excuses, and the most plausible palliations. It happens whenever we have to lay before you such doctrines and commands as are manifestly at variance with the prejudices of the age in which we live, with the prevailing manner of thinking and acting; (and not a few of such doctrines and commands are contained in the Religion of JESUS, which derives its origin from Heaven, and is ordained to conduct us to the regions of bliss); it happens especially whenever we labour to inspire you with that humble, that gentle, that compassionate, that heavenly mind, which is the distinguishing characteristic of the disciples of the Son of God, and which yet is so rarely found among those who call themselves

selves his Disciples. In these and similar cases, we are almost tempted to despondency, and can cherish but little hope of reaching the aim of our exertions. And whence does this proceed? Our own sad experience but too strikingly informs us, how much the corrupted heart, and the unruly passions of men, oppose these doctrines and commands; and how quickly the good impressions, they sometimes make on us in the House of the LORD, are effaced in the tumult of the world.

But there are other times, when with confident and chearful spirits we appear before you, because we are animated with the pleasing expectation, that we shall effect our good designs, if not with all, yet certainly with many. In such a frame of mind, in such delightful hopes, I meet you in this sacred place to-day. I am to be the advocate, the intercessor, with you, for the poor, the friendless, and the wretched:

ed: I shall in their name, nay, more than in their name, I shall in the name of **JESUS CHRIST**, who acknowledges these needy for his brethren, and who most ardently recommends them to you, in the name of this mightiest and meekest **LORD**, our unalterable **SAVIOUR**, I shall implore your affectionate assistance and support. I shall in particular recommend to you the encouragement of a very necessary and generally useful institution; I mean, the provision now set on foot for the education of the children of poor in this place: certainly a generous and agreeable undertaking! Happy shall I be, happy will it be for you, if I execute it with that success I promise myself from your Christian tenderness! Nay, I know that there are many compassionate hearts among you, to whom discipline and order, Religion and virtue, and the happiness of mankind that is founded upon them, are no indifferent things. I have on similar occasions addressed

ressed you with similar prayers; and, to the honour of your Christian profession, you have not been regardless of them. Why then may I not hope, under the blessing of the Most High, to reach my design to-day? To this end, though I presuppose these beneficent and generous dispositions in the generality of us, it will not be unserviceable, if we employ the remainder of this discourse in confirming them in our hearts, and at the same time in endeavouring to excite them in such as are still strangers to them. And how can we better do this, than by calling to mind the blessedness of beneficence? The consideration of the beautiful saying of our SAVIOUR ought infallibly to conduce thereto: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." We will first lay down the justness of the assertion, and then reply to some objections that may be brought against it.

"It is more blessed to give than to re-

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ceive."

ceive." This is an axiom that is become, as it were, proverbial among Christians; so little is the truth of it in general called in question. Is it not then, may some probably think, is it not unnecessary to demonstrate a proposition which every one holds for proved and undeniable? No; the case is quite different with such universal maxims and rules of life. Should they have a due influence on our conduct, and all depends on this; then it is not enough that we do not doubt of their truth; we must frequently and forcibly represent to ourselves the reasons whereon we hold them for true; we must separate the singular ideas they comprehend, or the observations and experiences whereon they rest; we must bring home the application of them to ourselves; we must perceive them in a diversified and brilliant light, if we would have them convince, and move, and animate, our hearts. And this is the object of my following considerations.

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“It is more blessed to give than to receive;” for the former, in the first place, implies a happier condition than the latter. To the former belongs a certain degree of power, of affluence, of independency; the latter has weakness, want, penury, dependency, for its foundation. I will not say, that a man may not be happy in all stations. No; “fear God; keep his commandments;” maintain a good conscience; secure yourself the favour and grace of the Most High; follow temperance, and keep content; think and live like one who has here no abiding city, and whose country is heaven; so will you never be wanting in true felicity, be you otherwise high or low, rich or poor, in abundance or in need. But certain as this is, so certain is it likewise, that he is still the happier who, with all these essential advantages, has also the means of doing good to others in a larger or smaller proportion. In what does the sovereign felicity of God consist? Un-

doubtedly in this, that his power of doing good is infinite, and that he continually exerts it in the best and most perfect manner. Undoubtedly in this, that, from his exalted throne, full streams of benefits and blessings incessantly flow on every part of his immense dominion, diffusing light, and life, and power, and joy, and bliss, on all the inhabitants of it. Wherein will the happiness of the just consist in the world to come? An enlarged capacity of doing good, and of imparting it to others in the most useful way, will undoubtedly compose a considerable portion of it. Here it not unfrequently happens, that men of the most philanthropic, the most benevolent, the most patriotic sentiments, are destitute of almost all the means for acting in conformity to them; and, if they had less veneration for the providence of God, they would probably be often tempted to lament over the narrow limits that are prescribed them in these particulars. Yonder, in that
better

better world, all these limitations will not indeed be removed; they, however, will be considerably enlarged. There will these generous spirits unimpededly pursue their beneficent propensions, and be able to apply in a much worthier manner all their powers to the benefit of their less-perfect fellow-creatures. As beings that have been faithful in the administration of the little that was entrusted to them, they will be appointed to the management of much. They will reign with CHRIST, and share with him in his glory, his power of doing good. The more therefore a man dispenses here on earth about him in regard to some benefit to his brethren, the more serviceable he may be to them; the less need he has to set bounds to his generosity: the greater means he has of encreasing the earthly or the spiritual, the temporal or the eternal, welfare, of his neighbour, and of diffusing comfort, satisfaction, and joy, around him; so much the nearer does

he bring his condition to the condition of the blessed in heaven; so much more resplendent in him is the image of God and CHRIST; nay, so much greater part has he even in the felicity of the first and most perfect of all Beings.

“It is more blessed to give than to receive;” for the former is, secondly, blended with a variegated pleasure, with a satisfaction intrinsically divine; whereas the latter is commonly connected with unpleasant and painful sensations. How difficult it frequently is, even to the humblest of them that suffer want and distress, what a hardship it is to them to make known their want and their distress, to ask for assistance and support, and thus to expose themselves to the risk of harsh censures, of cutting reproaches, of bitter scoffs, and at length to a sharp refusal of all compassion and every comfort! What distress, what misery, therefore, do they not often prefer

fer to such dreadful situations as these, which oppress their souls, and fill them with grief and dismay ! Never forget this, O you whom God has blessed with earthly goods, and has thereby constituted you, as it were, the guardians and fathers of the poor and needy. Render not the load that already oppresses them still heavier by your unfriendly and cruel behaviour. They are already enough to be pitied, that they are obliged to be dependent on you, who are men as well as they. O let them not feel this dependency in a manner injurious to human-nature, and shocking to their Creator ! Beware, even at the time when you are granting the succours they implore, of degrading and reviling them ; and attach not your benefactions to such conditions as deprive them of all their value. Are they benefactions in regard to those to whom you shew them ; yet are they not so in regard to God, who has laid them as a duty upon you. Though your poor bro-

ther cannot demand them of you as his due, yet God has a right to demand them of you, from whom you have received whatever you possess, and who actually does demand them. But you cannot satisfy him, the Omniscient, with the simple deed; only the way and the manner in which you do it can procure you his good pleasure. Give therefore freely; give abundantly; give in pure and good designs; give in a generous and engaging manner; give as one friend gives to another, as a father gives to his children: then, and not till then, will you taste the pleasure which is connected with that bounty. And how diversified, how great, how exalted, is this pleasure! You know it, you who exercise yourselves in beneficence with genuine Christian sentiments; you know what your hearts enjoy, what pure and heavenly transports fill them, when you "weep with them that weep," and are so happy as to dry up the tears of the mourner; when you take
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the forsaken to your care, and can administer help to the destitute; when you have an opportunity to rescue the innocent, to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to alleviate the distresses of the poor, the pains of the sick, and the anguish of the sorrowful heart; when you can compensate the widow for the loss of her spouse, and the orphan for the privation of a parent, as much as in you lies; when you shed some rays of light, of comfort, and hope, and satisfaction, in the abodes where darkness, fears, and wretchedness, prevailed. You know the feelings of your heart, what streams of pure and sacred transports fill it, when you are able to contribute somewhat to the advancement of discipline and order, of the honour of God and of Religion, to the instruction, to the improvement, to the spiritual and everlasting happiness, of your brethren; and you then form an idea of the blessed consequences this labour of love may have,
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and, under the blessing of the Most High, will infallibly have, in all the generations to come. Oh, then you first thoroughly feel the exquisite worth of the earthly goods wherewith God has blessed you; then you thank him, with tears of joy, for the honour and happiness he has given you to know, of filling, as it were, his place among mankind, and of clearing them, in his stead, with what his goodness has been pleased to grant you; then your whole heart expands, and can scarcely contain the heavenly delight that flows into it. Where, where is there an earthly, sensual pleasure to be found, that can be brought into comparison with this!

In fine, "it is more blessed to give than to receive;" for it has, when properly performed, the most glorious retributions to expect both in this and the future world. Already the pleasure that is connected with it, and which I have not so much described

scribed as pointed out, since it is impossible to be described; already this pleasure, to a sensible und generous heart, is reward enough. But the merciful God, to whom beneficence is so great a delight, has decreed it still greater advantages and blessings. Hear how the Psalmist describes it: "Unto the upright," says he, peculiarly to the humane, "there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous: the God of all mercies comforts him in his sorrows, and delivers him out of his troubles. He is merciful, and lendeth. He shall never be moved. He shall be had in everlasting remembrance. He will not be afraid of any evil tidings, for his heart standeth fast and believeth in the LORD. His heart is stablished, and will not shrink. He hath dispersed abroad, and given to the poor; and his righteousness remaineth for ever. The blessing of his beneficence abides ever upon him; his horn shall be exalted with honour."

honour." And all this is but little in comparison with the glorious rewards that await the beneficent in the future world. Call up the idea of that solemn day of judgment and retribution which shall decide our eternal lot; and admire the glory and happiness that will then be the portion of the Christian who has here employed himself in acts of benevolence. The Judge of the world, the Son of God, will say to them, before the whole assembly of angels and of men: "Come, ye blessed children of my Father! inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world. For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; I was naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came to me. Verily I say unto you: Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." Oh, transporting scene! Oh, inexpressible reward!

ward ! Let us then do good, and never be weary, that we may reap, in due time, this honour, and this felicity ! Let us not reckon that for lost which we do for the poor and needy, but account it our greatest gains ; for “ to give ” is certainly, in all respects, “ more blessed than to receive.”

Unhappy they, by whom this is neither felt nor perceived, who make objections against the fulfilling of that duty which of all others is the most agreeable and blessed ! However, we will hear their objections ; we will try them ; probably we may be so fortunate as to convince them of their weakness and insufficiency.

It is true, you probably imagine, “ it is more blessed to give than to receive.” But, if we guide ourselves by this maxim, if we follow our propensity to beneficence, we shall thereby do an injury to ourselves and our family ; we shall diminish, instead of increasing,

increasing, our goods. Yes, my brother, so you would, if the preservation and increase of your goods depended merely on you; if they solely arose from your diligence, from your dexterity, from your frugality, then would your objection have a solid foundation. But if, as both Reason and Scripture assure us, the generality, if comparatively all of them, proceed from the blessing of the Most High; if, without it, the most sedulous application, the greatest dexterity, the strictest parsimony, are utterly fruitless; and if this blessing be annexed to beneficence: then this objection loses all its force. And, for the confutation of it, have I need to appeal to your own observation and experience? Do you know any one, who, merely by beneficence duly consoled with prudence, has fallen into indigence or poverty? May you not, on the contrary, be acquainted with several, who have constantly sought their satisfaction in beneficence,

cence, and who, by the blessing of Heaven, have not only preserved, but considerably augmented, their property? No; "he that giveth to the poor," says the wise man, "shall not lack." There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.—Let us, however, suppose, that it should not seem good to the Most High to reward your beneficence with earthly profusion; suppose, that you leave behind you no great riches for your children; is it then necessary for their happiness that they should inherit great possessions from you? Are they always truly happy, who enjoy great wealth? Does not experience rather teach you the contrary? How dangerous to children at all times, how ruinous often, are the treasures they inherit from their parents! Are there not far more honest, ingenious, useful, virtuous, and prosperous men, among those who are indebted to their fathers and mothers for little more than

than a good education, and a good example, than among those who have received from them much property, or even great affluence? Is not this property, is not this affluence, most commonly a snare to them? Do they not usually hinder them from employing their natural capacities and talents, and from becoming as useful and deserving members of society as it was in their power to be?

Oh you, whom God has blessed with children, and who so tenderly love your off-spring as to be ever afraid they should miss of any thing, leave them the invaluable blessing that God has annexed to beneficence; leave them the love and the pious wishes of the wretched whom you have revived, of the feeble whom you have supported, of the innocent whom you have delivered, of the poor whom you have relieved, of the forlorn whom you have adopted, of the orphans who, by your assistance,

assistance, have been rendered useful members of the state, of the low among the people, whom you, by instruction, by prudent counsel, by real succours, have lifted from the dust; leave them the example of the fear of God, of industry, of contentedness, of discretion, of moderation: so may you be far more certain of their future prosperity; so may you hereafter part with them with a far more tranquil spirit, than if, with the want of these advantages, you left them the greatest treasures. These treasures, as the wise man says, may take to themselves the wings of an eagle, and quickly forsake them; nay, on the slippery path of life they may easily fall to the ground, and sink their possessor with them. But that blessing of the LORD shall remain for ever; these pious wishes open to them the treasures of Heaven; those poor and mean, those wretched and forlorn, who have so much to thank you for, who stand indebted to

you for their preservation, or their welfare, will afford them a hundred agreeable and useful services; those examples of virtue and piety will preserve them from innumerable by-ways, and make them wise to everlasting happiness.

And let no man say: It is true, "it is more blessed to give than to receive," but the times are no longer of such a complexion, as to allow us to distribute benefactions and refreshments with a liberal hand among the poor and necessitous. A man is obliged to set limits to his expences in all manner of ways; he must deny himself a great many conveniencies and pleasures, which he otherwise need not hesitate to have and to enjoy; and therefore it is perfectly natural for a man to confine his liberality to narrower bounds. But, my dear friend, if you really limit yourself by all manner of ways, and in all respects; if you do, and are obliged to do, this in regard to your table, to your furniture,

niture, your cloaths, and your pleasures : then we neither will nor can impute it to you as a sin, if the same thing happen, in due proportion, in regard to your alms and your works of compassion. But, if you do this barely, or principally, in this and not in the other respect ; if you are as profuse for yourself and your family in all, or in the generality of particulars, as your better days allowed you to be, and are only become more frugal and sparing in regard to the poor and needy : then, my friend, then you undoubtedly commit a crime that no circumstances of time are able to excuse. You seize on the substance of the poor, on that portion of what you have in trust, to which your less prosperous brethren have, both from nature and Religion, the most righteous claim, and which you cannot, without cruelty, detain. You can no longer be called true and faithful stewards of the goods committed to your charge, as you turn them

solely to your own advantage, and not to the benefit of those, whom he to whom they indefeasibly belong, has expressly recommended to your providence and help.

The Christian, who rightfully bears that title, the Christian in whose soul the genuine love of his neighbour abides and prevails, behaves quite otherwise in such situations. Do times and circumstances require him to confine his expences, he does it; he does it without reluctance; because he has learnt to be content with his lot, and to be satisfied under all events; but he does not begin with the poor and needy, he begins with himself; he rather deprives himself of many superfluous delicacies, many unnecessary accommodations, many innocent, but merely sensual and rapid pleasures, than, in abundance and joy, leave the wretched to their misery, who fly to him as a shelter from the storm, and a refuge from distress; which

which he cannot do, without at the same time robbing himself of the godlike pleasure of restoring their spirits, and chearing the broken heart. No, nothing but distress, nothing but actual indigence, can force him to do so much violence to his humane and benevolent affections, and to neglect that which has hitherto been his purest, his supreme delight.

In short, let no man say: True, "it is more blessed to give than to receive;" but who knows, whether he to whom we give make the best, that he will make a proper use of it? Who knows whether the noble institutions we are called upon to support are effectually of that utility we ought to expect? Who knows whether, in times to come, they may not be converted to quite other designs? O, my friend, how much should we be to be pitied; if God, whom we are bound to imitate as our Father, were to deal with us according to these

dictates of frugality ! Do we always employ the bounties of his munificent hand to the ends for which they are bestowed ? Do we manage them so carefully, so faithfully, so conscientiously, as we might and ought to do ? Would not numbers, would not the majority, nay, would not all of us, be divested of the capacities, the powers, the goods of fortune, the privileges, we possess, if God should resolve to strip us of all that we do not constantly employ to the best, or even that we at times employ to evil purpose ? And yet this kind and clement God leaves us these capacities, these powers, these goods of fortune, these privileges ; and yet he gives us from day to day fresh tokens of his unwearied beneficence. And we shall be so much harder against our fellow-creatures, against our brethren, than God is towards us, his creatures and his subjects ! We shall, merely out of fear lest they should misemploy our gifts of love, withhold our hand
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from doing them good! We shall leave such numbers, who groan in misery without their fault, uncomforted and unrelieved, because there are criminals who deserve no comfort and no relief! We shall punish the innocent, the upright, at once with the wicked, because we cannot at all times distinguish the one from the other! We shall refuse to support noble establishments and publicly good institutions, to the utmost of our ability, because we have no complete assurance, that the views to which they are appointed will be attained, or that these establishments will in all future times be conducted on the most excellent rules! No, my friend, this as a Christian you will not, you cannot do. Make use of a prudent circumspection in the distribution of your bounty; this is your duty. Be inflexible, be inexorable towards those who you know for certain will misemploy it; this the safety and welfare of human society demand. But be not hasty in the

judgment you pass on the deserts, on the sentiments and views, of the necessitous. Be not an austere, but a compassionate and indulgent censor of your brother's conduct; judge him so as you may reasonably desire that God should judge you. Like as it is far better that ten guilty should be absolved, than that one innocent person should be condemned by too harsh a sentence; so it is likewise far better that you should do good to ten unworthy beings, than, for the sake of avoiding this, that you should let one worthy person suffer, without relief, who flies to you for succour. Require not, in fine, in human institutions and establishments, a perfection which perhaps exceeds our human powers; and do not refuse to promote and encourage things which are good or generally useful, because they might perhaps be better and more generally useful. Consider too, that God, whose good pleasure must be of the utmost moment to us, looks more to the
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pious and Christian spirit in which we communicate our benefactions, than to the effects they actually produce ; and that, in his retributions, he guides himself more by them than he does by these. Our good works in numberless instances resemble the seed that lies long concealed in the ground, and which at length shoots upward, and brings forth fruit, though even we may probably have forgot that ever we sowed it. Let us but do our duty ; let us do it with chearfulness and without being weary, and leave the consequences of it to that God who knows and governs all things, and under whose administration no good deed can be done in vain.

Let us then at present make no account of these futile objections that arise from avarice or unseasonable parsimony, but fulfill the duty of beneficence, according to our best capacities, now when I have to recommend to you,—now, when the foundation

dation of an establishment is to be laid, which many of you, with the greatest reason, have so often wished for, and the utility whereof may extend to all future times, becoming greater and more various from day to day. And what arguments are wanting, on this occasion, to be liberal, and to expect from our liberality the most blessed effects? The harder the times, and the dearer provisions may be; the more certain it is that numbers of the poor go forth to work in vain, and the more easily may they be tempted to unlawful attempts, and to destructive attacks on the public safety: the more undeniable, in short, it is, that wicked or unhappy men, by painful and ignominious punishments, usually become still more wicked and unhappy, and, on the other hand, by discipline and labour, often better; so much the more needful are institutions like the present, and so much the less should we shrink from contributing

contributing of what we possess to the foundation and maintenance of them.

The poor, who from no fault of theirs are poor, and would willingly work had they the means and opportunity thereto; most certainly compose a department of human society that is entitled to all possible consideration and respect: but also those, who by their own inadvertencies, or from the want of a good education, are fallen into poverty, or even by poverty have been betrayed into injustice and theft, are not totally unworthy of our care and compassion. They may probably still amend; they may probably still be made useful members of society; they may at least stop short in the career of their disorderly life, and be preserved from yet greater and more flagitious crimes. They have immortal souls as well as we, that are capable of eternal happiness; and these souls may be brought to reflection by discipline and labour,

bour, may be penetrated with remorse and repentance at the sight of their sins and vices, awakened to better and more Christian sentiments, and thus be rescued from that horrible perdition which awaits the hardened sinner. And shall we not do all that we can to the promoting of these noble designs? How can we better employ the goods that God has given us, than in the accommodating and tending so many poor and wretched objects, who are still our brethren, both as men and Christians? Indeed, what we are now able to do cannot at once, and probable can never wholly, supply the various wants of this too numerous class of mankind. Indeed, the fruits of the good institutions we are now to promote cannot be so remarkably abundant in the first years of their foundation. But do not the best human regulations and attempts only gradually reach their perfections? Must we not first sow, before we can reap? May not that, which at its commencement

mencement can only be serviceable to a few, in the future be useful and a blessing to thousands? Would not almost every charitable institution, and generally useful establishment, be buried in oblivion, if we resolved to support them no otherwise than in the complete assurance of the best effects?

Oh, let us then look not barely at the present, but also at the future; and place our perfect confidence on the Providence of God, that whatever is good he will certainly bless. Let us frequently pursue the animating reflection: I now commit good seed to the earth, I now contribute, with an honest heart, and in sincere intentions, my portion, that discipline and order may be maintained; that idleness, and the numberless excesses and crimes to which it leads, may be restrained; that the innocent may be delivered; that the transgressor may be chastened and reformed; that

that the poor who is in want of bread, or is obliged to acquire it by begging, may find a proper support. Many an one will one day bless the kind institution I am now promoting, that his dreadful pains and anguish did not quite overwhelm him, and that his innocence was brought forth in open day. Many an one will bless the institution I am now promoting, that he was terrified from the ways of sin and ruin, or restored to virtue; that he was snatched from the extreme of misery and from despair; that he found food for his body, and help and deliverance for his soul. What prospects! Who can remain unmoved and cold at the idea of the manifold good that may and will be effected by such institutions? What generous, what Christian heart that will not make it his duty and his joy to contribute of what he has to these delightful hopes? This is what you will do; I expect it from your Christian and beneficent dispositions: and if you do
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it with an honest heart, and in sincere intentions, then may I assuredly promise you, in the name of God, who through me has incited you to beneficence, that you will be acceptable to him, and that he will give you his blessing.

THE END.



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